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P R E F A C E S,
B I O G R A P H I C A L
A N D
C R I T I C A L,
T O T H E
W O R K S
O F T H E
E N G L I S H P O E T S.
B Y S A M U E L J O H N S O N.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

L O N D O N:

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M D C C L X X I X.



P R E F A C E
TO
D R Y D E N.



D R Y D E N

OF the great poet whose life I am about to delineate, the curiosity which his reputation must excite, will require a display more ample than can now be given. His contemporaries, however they revered his genius, left his life unwritten; and nothing therefore can be known beyond what casual mention and uncertain tradition have supplied.

JOHN DRYDEN was born August 9th, 1631, at Aldwincle near Oun-

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He, the son of Erasmus Dryden of Tichmarsh; who was the third son of Sir Erasmus Dryden, Baronet, of Canons Ashby. All these places are in Northamptonshire; but the original stock of the family was in the county of Huntingdon.

He is reported by his last biographer, Derrick, to have inherited from his father an estate of two hundred a year, and to have been bred, as was said, an Anabaptist. For either of these particulars no authority is given. Such a fortune ought to have secured him from that poverty which seems always to have oppressed him; or, if he had wasted it, to have made him ashamed of publishing his necessities. But though he had
many

many enemies, who undoubtedly examined his life with a scrutiny sufficiently malicious, I do not remember that he is ever charged with waste of his patrimony, or considered as a deserter from another religion. I am therefore inclined to believe that Derrick was misinformed.

From Westminster School, where he was instructed as one of the king's scholars by Dr. Busby, whom he long after continued to reverence, he was in 1650 elected to one of the Westminster scholarships at Cambridge.

Of his school performances has appeared only a poem on the death of Lord Hastings, composed with great ambition of such conceits as, notwith-

4. D. R. Y. D. E. N.

standing the reformation begun by Waller and Denham, the example of Cowley still kept in reputation. Lord Hastings died of the small-pox, and his poet has made of the pustules first rosebuds, and then gems; at last exalts them into stars; and says,

No comet need foretell his change drew
on,

Whose corps might seem a constellation.

At the university he does not appear to have been eager of poetical distinction, or to have lavished his early wit either on fictitious subjects or publick occasions. He probably considered that he who purposed to be an author, ought first to be a student. He obtained, whatever was the reason, no fellowship

in the College. Why he was excluded, cannot now be known, and it is vain to guess: had he thought himself injured, he knew how to complain. In the Life of Plutarch he mentions his education in the College with gratitude; but in a prologue at Oxford, he has these lines:

Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
Than his own mother-university;
Thebes did his rude unknowing youth
engage;
He chooses Athens in his riper age.

It was not till the death of Cromwel, in 1658, that he became a publick candidate for fame, by publishing *Heroick Stanzas on the late Lord Protector*; which, compared with the verses of

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Sprat and Waller on the same occasion, were sufficient to raise great expectations of the rising poet.

When the king was restored, Dryden, like the other panegyrists of usurpation, changed his opinion, or his profession, and published *ASTREA REDUX*, a poem on the happy restoration and return of his most sacred Majesty King Charles the Second.

The reproach of inconstancy was on this occasion, shared with such numbers, that it produced neither hatred nor disgrace; if he changed, he changed with the nation. It was, however, not totally forgotten when his reputation raised him enemies.

The

The same year he praised the new king in a second poem on his restoration. In the *ASTRÆA* was the line,

- An horrid *stilness* first invades the ear,

And in that silence we a tempest fear: for which he was persecuted with perpetual ridicule, perhaps with more than was deserved. *Silence* is indeed mere privation; and, so considered, cannot *invade*; but privation likewise certainly is *darkness*, and probably *cold*; yet poetry has never been refused the right of ascribing effects or agency to them as to positive powers. No man scruples to say that *darkness* hinders him from his work; or that *cold* has killed the plants. Death is also privation, yet who has

made any difficulty of assigning to Death a dart and the power of striking?

In settling the order of his works, there is some difficulty; for, even when they are important enough to be formally offered to a patron, he does not commonly date his dedication; the time of writing and publishing is not always the same; nor can the first editions be easily found, if even from them could be obtained the necessary information.

The time at which his first play was exhibited is not certainly known, because it was not printed till it was some years afterwards altered and revived; but if the plays are printed in the order in which they were written, from the
 dates

dates of some, those of others may be inferred; and thus it may be collected that in 1663, in the thirty-second year of his life, he commenced a writer for the stage; compelled undoubtedly by necessity, for he appears never to have loved that exercise of his genius, or to have much pleased himself with his own dramas.

Of the stage, when he had once invaded it, he kept possession for many years; not indeed without the competition of rivals who sometimes prevailed, or the censure of criticks, which was often poignant and often just; but with such a degree of reputation as made him at least secure of being heard, whatever might

might be the final determination of the publick.

His first piece was a comedy called the *Wild Gallant*. He began with no happy auguries; for his performance was so much disapproved, that he was compelled to recall it, and change it from its imperfect state to the form in which it now appears, and which is yet sufficiently defective to vindicate the criticks.

I wish that there were no necessity of following the progress of his theatrical fame, or tracing the meanders of his mind through the whole series of his dramattick performances; and indeed there is the less, as they do not appear in the collection to which this narration

is to be annexed. It will be fit however to enumerate them, and to take especial notice of those that are distinguished by any peculiarity intrinsic or concomitant; for the composition and fate of eight and twenty dramas include too much of a poetical life to be omitted.

In 1664 he published the *Rival Ladies*, which he dedicated to the earl of Orrery, a man of high reputation both as a writer and a statesman. In this play he made his essay of dramatick rhyme, which he defends in his dedication, with sufficient certainty of a favourable hearing; for Orrery was himself a writer of rhyming tragedies.

He then joined with Sir Robert Howard in the *Indian Queen*, a tragedy

in

in rhyme. The parts which either of them wrote are not distinguished.

The *Indian Emperor* was published in 1667. It is a tragedy in rhyme, intended for a sequel to *Howard's Indian Queen*. Of this connection notice was given to the audience by printed bills, distributed at the door; an expedient supposed to be ridiculed in the *Rehearsal*, when Bays tells how many reams he has printed, to instill into the audience some conception of his plot.

In this play is the description of Night, which *Rymer* has made famous by preferring it to those of all other poets.

The practice of making tragedies in rhyme was introduced soon after the

Resto-

Restoration, as it seems, by the earl of Orrery, in compliance with the opinion of Charles the Second, who had formed his taste by the French theatre; and Dryden, who wrote, and made no difficulty of declaring that he wrote, only to please, and who perhaps knew that by his dexterity of versification he was more likely to excel others in rhyme than without it, very readily adopted his master's preference. He therefore made rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he seems to have grown ashamed of making them any longer.

To this play is prefixed a very vehement defence of dramatick rhyme, in confutation of the preface to the *Duke of*

Lerma,

Lerna, in which Sir Robert Howard had censured it.

In 1667, he published *Annus Mirabilis*, the *Year of Wonders*, which seems to be one of his most elaborate works.

It is addressed to Sir Robert Howard by a letter, which is not properly a dedication; and, writing to a poet, he has interspersed many critical observations, of which some are common, and some perhaps ventured without much consideration. He began, even now, to exercise the domination of conscious genius, by recommending his own performance: “ I am satisfied that as the Prince and “ General [Rupert and Monk] are incomparably the best subjects I ever “ had, so what I have written on them “ is

“ is much better than what I have per-
 “ formed on any other. As I have en-
 “ deavoured to adorn my poem with
 “ noble thoughts, so much more to
 “ express those thoughts with elocu-
 “ tion.”

It is written in quatrains, or heroick
 stanzas of four lines; a measure which
 he had learned from the *Gondibert* of
 Davenant, and which he then thought
 the most majestick that the English lan-
 guage affords. Of this stanza he men-
 tions the encumbrances, encreased as they
 were by the exactness which the age re-
 quired. It was, throughout his life,
 very much his custom to recommend his
 works, by representation of the diffi-
 culties that he had encountered, with-
 out

out appearing to have sufficiently considered, that where there is no difficulty there is no praise.

There seems to be in the conduct of Sir Robert Howard and Dryden towards each other, something that is not now easily to be explained. Dryden, in his dedication to the earl of Orrery, had defended dramattick rhyme; and Howard, in the preface to a collection of plays, had censured his opinion. Dryden vindicated himself in his *Dialogue on Dramattick Poetry*; Howard, in his Preface to the *Duke of Lerma*, animadverted on the Vindication; and Dryden, in a Preface to the *Indian Emperor*, replied to the Animadversions with great asperity, and almost with contumely.

The dedication to this play is dated the year in which the *Annus Mirabilis* was published. Here appears a strange inconsistency; but Langbaine affords some help, by relating that the answer to Howard was not published in the first edition of the play, but was added when it was afterwards reprinted; and as the *Duke of Lerma* did not appear till 1668, the same year in which the Dialogue was published, there was time enough for enmity to grow up between authors, who, writing both for the theatre, were naturally rivals.

He was now so much distinguished, that in 1668 he succeeded Sir William Davenant as poet-laureat. The salary of the laureat had been raised in favour

of Jonson, by Charles the First, from an hundred marks to one hundred pounds a year, and a tierce of wine; a revenue in those days not inadequate to the conveniencies of life.

The same year he published his Essay on Dramatick Poetry, an elegant and instructive dialogue; in which we are told by Prior, that the principal character is meant to represent the duke of Dorset. This work seems to have given Addison a model for his Dialogues upon Medals.

Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen, is a tragi-comedy. In the preface he discusses a curious question, whether a poet can judge well of his own productions: and determines very justly, that, of the

plan and disposition, and all that can be reduced to principles of science the author may depend upon his own opinion; but that, in those parts where fancy predominates, self-love may easily deceive. He might have observed, that what is good only because it pleases, cannot be pronounced good till it has been found to please.

Sir Martin Marall is a comedy, published without preface or dedication, and at first without the name of the author. Langbaine charges it, like most of the rest, with plagiarism; and observes that the song is translated from Voiture, allowing however that both the sense and measure are exactly observed.

The Tempest is an alteration of Shakspeare's play, made by Dryden in conjunction with Davenant, "whom, says
"he, I found of so quick a fancy, that
"nothing was proposed to him in which
"he could not suddenly produce a
"thought extremely pleasant and surprising; and those first thoughts of
"his, contrary to the Latin proverb,
"were not always the least happy; and
"as his fancy was quick, so likewise
"were the products of it remote and
"new. He borrowed not of any other,
"and his imaginations were such as
"could not easily enter into any other
"man."

The effect produced by the conjunction of these two powerful minds was,

that to Shakespeare's monster Caliban is added a sister-monster Sicorax; and a woman, who, in the original play, had never seen a man, is in this brought acquainted with a man that had never seen a woman.

About this time, in 1673, Dryden seems to have had his quiet much disturbed by the success of the *Empress of Morocco*, a tragedy written in rhyme by *Elkanah Settle*; which was so much applauded, as to make him think his supremacy of reputation in some danger. Settle had not only been prosperous on the stage, but in the confidence of success had published his play, with sculptures and a preface of defiance. Here was one offence added to another; and,

for the last blast of inflammation, it was acted at Whitehall by the court-ladies.

Dryden could not now repress these emotions, which he called indignation, and others jealousy ; but wrote upon the play and the dedication such a criticism as malignant impatience could pour out in haste.

Of Settle he gives this character.
“ He’s an animal of a most deplored
“ understanding, without conversation.
“ His being is in a twilight of sense,
“ and some glimmering of thought,
“ which he can never fashion into wit
“ or English. His stile is boisterous
“ and rough-hewn, his rhyme incor-
“ rigibly lewd, and his numbers perpetually harsh and ill-sounding. The
“ little

“ little talent which he has is fan-
 “ cy. He sometimes labours with a
 “ thought; but, with the pudder he
 “ makes to bring it into the world, ’tis
 “ commonly still-born; so that, for want
 “ of learning and elocution, he will ne-
 “ ver be able to express any thing either
 “ naturally or justly!”

This is not very decent; yet this is
 one of the pages in which criticism pre-
 vails most over brutal fury. He pro-
 ceeds. “ He has a heavy hand at fools,
 “ and a great felicity in writing nonsense
 “ for them. Fools they will be in spite
 “ of him. His King, his two Empresses,
 “ his villain, and his sub-villain, nay
 “ his hero, have all a certain natural
 “ cast of the father—their folly was

“ born and bred in them, and something

“ of the Elkanah will be visible.”

This is Dryden's general declamation ; I will not withhold from the reader a particular remark. Having gone thro' the first act, he says, “ To conclude this
“ act with the most rumbling piece of
“ nonsense spoken yet,

“ To flatt'ring lightning our feign'd

“ smiles conform,

“ Which back'd with thunder do but

“ gild a storm.

“ *Conform a smile to lightning*, make a

“ *smile imitate lightning*, and *flattering*

“ *lightning*: lightning sure is a threaten-

“ ing thing. And this lightning must

“ *gild a storm*. Now if I must conform

“ my smiles to lightning, then my

“ smiles

“ smiles must gild a storm too: to gild
 “ with *smiles* is a new invention of gild-
 “ ing. And gild a storm by being *backed*
 “ with *thunder*. Thunder is part of the
 “ storm; so one part of the storm must
 “ help to *gild* another part, and help
 “ by *backing*; as if a man would gild a
 “ thing the better for being backed, or
 “ having a load upon his back. So
 “ that here is *gilding* by *conforming*,
 “ *smiling*, *lightning*, *backing*, and *thun-*
 “ *dering*. The whole is as if I should
 “ say thus, I will make my counterfeit
 “ smiles look like a flattering stone-
 “ horse, which, being backed with a
 “ trooper, does but gild the battle. I
 “ am mistaken if nonsense is not here
 “ pretty thick sown. Sure the poet
 “ writ

“ write these two lines aboard some
 “ smack in a storm, and, being sea-sick,
 “ spewed up a good lump of clotted
 “ nonsense at once.”

Here is perhaps a sufficient specimen ;
 but as the pamphlet, though Dryden's,
 has never been thought worthy of re-
 publication, and is not easily to be found,
 it may gratify curiosity to quote it
 more largely.

*Whene'er she bleeds,
 He no severer a damnation needs,
 That dares pronounce the sentence of her
 death,
 Than the infection that attends that breath.*

“ That attends that breath.—The poet
 “ is at breath again ; breath can never
 “ ’scape

“ ’scape him ; and here he brings in a
 “ *breath* that must be *infectious* with *pro-*
 “ *nouncing* a sentence ; and this sentence
 “ is not to be pronounced till the con-
 “ demned party *bleeds* ; that is, she must
 “ be executed first, and sentenced after ;
 “ and the *pronouncing* of this *sentence*
 “ will be infectious ; that is, others will
 “ catch the disease of that sentence, and
 “ this infecting of others will torment
 “ a man’s self. The whole is thus ;
 “ *when she bleeds, thou needest no greater*
 “ *hell or torment to thyself, than infecting*
 “ *of others by pronouncing a sentence upon*
 “ *her.* What hodge-podge does he
 “ make here ! Never was Dutch grout
 “ such clogging, thick, indigestible
 “ stuff. But this is but a taste to stay
 “ the

“the stomach; we shall have a more
“plentiful mess presently.

“Now to dish up the poet’s broth,
“that I promised:

*For when we’re dead, and our freed souls
enlarg’d,*

*Of nature’s grosser burden we’re dis-
charg’d,*

*Then gently, as a happy lover’s sigh,
Like wand’ring meteors thro’ the air we’ll
fly,*

*And in our airy walk, as subtle guests,
We’ll steal into our cruel fathers breasts,
There read their souls, and track each
passion’s sphere:*

*See how revenge moves there, ambition
here.*

And

And in their orbs view the dark characters

Of sieges, ruins, murders, blood and wars.

We'll blot out all those hideous draughts,

and write

Pure and white forms; then with a ra-

diant light

Their breasts encircle, till their passions

be

Gentle as nature in its infancy:

Till soften'd by our charms their furies

cease,

And their revenge resolves into a peace.

Thus by our death their quarrel ends,

Whom living we made foes, dead we'll

make friends.

" If this be not a very liberal mess, I

" will refer myself to the stomach of

" any

“any moderate guest. And a rare mess
“it is, far excelling any Westminster
“white-broth. It is a kind of gibblet
“porridge, made of the gibblets of a
“couple of young geese, stodged full
“of *meteors, orbs, spheres, track, hideous*
“*draughts, dark characters, white forms,*
“and *radiant light*, designed not only to
“please appetite, and indulge luxury ;
“but it is also physical, being an ap-
“proved medicine to purge choler : for
“it is propounded by Morena, as a re-
“ceipt to cure their fathers of their
“choleric humours : and were it writ-
“ten in characters as barbarous as the
“words, might very well pass for a
“doctor’s bill. To conclude, it is
“porridge, ’tis a receipt, ’tis a pig with
“a pud-

“ a pudding in the belly, ’tis I know
 “ not what: for, certainly, never any
 “ one that pretended to write sense had
 “ the impudence before to put such
 “ stuff, as this, into the mouths of those
 “ that were to speak it before an au-
 “ dience, whom he did not take to be
 “ all fools; and after that to print it
 “ too, and expose it to the examination
 “ of the world. But let us see, what
 “ we can make of this stuff:

*For when we’re dead, and our freed souls
 enlarg’d—*

“ Here he tells us what it is to be *dead*;
 “ it is to have *our freed souls set free*.
 “ Now if to have a soul set free is to be
 “ dead, then to have a *freed soul set free*,
 “ is to have a dead man die.

Then

Then gentle, as a happy lover's sigh—

“ They two like one *sigh*, and that one

“ *sigh* like two wandering meteors,

—shall flie through the air—

“ That is, they shall mount above like

“ falling stars, or else they shall skip

“ like two Jacks with lanthorns, or Will

“ with a wisp, and Madge with a candle.

*And in their airy walk steal into their
cruel fathers breasts, like subtle guests. So*

“ that their fathers breasts must be in

“ an airy walk, an airy walk of a flier.

“ *And there they will read their souls, and*

“ *track the spheres of their passions. That*

“ is, these walking fliers, Jack with a

“ lanthorn, &c. will put on his specta-

“ cles and fall a *reading* souls, and put

“ on his pumps and fall a *tracking* of

“ *spheres* ;

“ *spheres* ; so that he will read and run,
 “ walk and fly at the same time ! Oh !
 “ Nimble Jack. *Then he will see, how*
 “ *revenge here, how ambition there*—The
 “ birds will hop about. *And then view*
 “ *the dark characters of sieges, ruins, mur-*
 “ *ders, blood, and wars, in their orbs :*
 “ *Track the characters* to their forms !
 “ Oh ! rare sport for Jack. Never was
 “ place so full of game as these breasts !
 “ You cannot stir but you flush a sphere,
 “ start a character, or unkennel an orb !”

Settle's is said to have been the first play
 embellished with sculptures ; those or-
 naments seem to have given poor Dry-
 den great disturbance. He tries how-
 ever to ease his pain, by venting his ma-
 lice in a parody.

d “ The

“ The poet has not only been so im-
“ pudent to expose all this stuff, but so
“ arrogant to defend it with an epistle;
“ like a saucy booth-keeper, that, when he
“ had put a cheat upon the people, would
“ wrangle and fight with any that would
“ not like it, or would offer to discover
“ it: for which arrogance our poet re-
“ ceives this correction; and to jerk
“ him a little the sharper, I will not
“ transpose his verse, but by the help
“ of his own words trans-non-sense sense,
“ that, by my stuff, people may judge
“ the better what his is.

“ Great Boy, thy tragedy and sculptures
“ done

“ From press, and plates in fleets do
“ homeward come:

“ And in ridiculous and humble pride,

“ Their course in ballad-fingers baskets

“ guide,

“ Whose greasy twigs do all new beau-

“ ties take,

“ From the gay shews thy dainty sculp-

“ tures make.

“ Thy lines a mess of rhiming nonsense

“ yield,

“ A senseless tale, with flattering fustian

“ fill’d.

“ No grain of sense does in one line

“ appear,

“ Thy words big bulks of boist’rous

“ bombast bear.

“ With noise they move, and from

“ players mouths rebound,

“ When their tongues dance to thy

“ words empty sound.

“ By thee inspir’d the rumbling verses

“ roll,

“ As if that rhyme and bombast lent a

“ soul :

“ And with that soul they seem taught

“ duty too,

“ To huffing words does humble non-

“ sense bow,

“ As if it would thy worthless worth

“ enhance,

“ To th’ lowest rank of fops thy praise

“ advance ;

“ To whom, by instinct, all thy stuff is

“ dear ;

“ Their loud claps echo to the theatre.

“ From breaths of fools thy commen-

“ dation spreads,

“ Fame sings thy praise with mouths

“ of loggerheads.

“ With

“ With noise and laughing, each thy
“ fustian greets,

“ ’Tis clapt by quires of empty-headed
“ cits,

“ Who have their tribute sent, and
“ homage given,

“ As men in whispers send loud noise
“ to heaven.

“ Thus I have daubed him with his
“ own puddle : and now we are come
“ from aboard his dancing, masking, re-
“ bounding, breathing fleet ; and as if
“ we had landed at Gotham, we meet
“ nothing but fools and nonsense.”

Such was the criticism to which the
genius of Dryden could be reduced, be-
tween rage and terrour ; rage with little

provocation, and terrour with little danger. To see the highest minds thus levelled with the meanest, may produce some solace to the consciousness of weakness, and some mortification to the pride of wisdom. But let it be remembered, that minds are not levelled in their powers but when they are first levelled in their desires. Dryden and Settle had both placed their happiness in the claps of multitudes.

The *Mock Astrologer*, a comedy, is dedicated to the illustrious duke of Newcastle, whom he courts by adding to his praises those of his lady, not only as a lover but a partner of his studies. It is unpleasing to think how many names, once celebrated, are since forgotten.

Of

Of Newcastle's works nothing is now known but his treatise on Horsemanship.

The Preface seems very elaborately written, and contains many just remarks on the Fathers of the English drama. Shakespeare's plots, he says, are in the hundred novels of *Cinthio*; those of Beaumont and Fletcher in Spanish stories; Jonson only made them for himself. His criticisms upon tragedy, comedy, and farce, are judicious and profound. He endeavours to defend the immorality of some of his comedies by the example of former writers; which is only to say, that he was not the first nor perhaps the greatest offender. Against those that accused him of plagiarism,

giarism, he alleges a favourable expression of the King: "He only desired
"that they, who accuse me of thefts,
"would steal him plays like mine;"
and then relates how much labour he spends in fitting for the English stage what he borrows from others.

Tyrannick Love, or the Virgin Martyr, was another tragedy in rhyme, conspicuous for many passages of strength and elegance, and many of empty noise and ridiculous turbulence. The rants of Maximin have been always the sport of criticism; and were at length, if his own confession may be trusted, the shame of the writer.

Of this play he takes care to let the reader know, that it was contrived and
written

written in seven weeks. Want of time was often his excuse, or perhaps shortness of time was his private boast in the form of an apology.

It was written before *The Conquest of Granada*, but published after it. The design is to recommend piety. "I considered that pleasure was not the only end of poesy, and that even the instructions of morality were not so wholly the business of a poet, as that precepts and examples of piety were to be omitted; for to leave that employment altogether to the clergy, were to forget that religion was first taught in verse which the laziness or dulness of succeeding priesthood turned afterwards into prose." Thus foolish.

foolishly could Dryden write, rather than not shew his malice to the parsons.

The two parts of the *Conquest of Granada* are written with a seeming determination to glut the publick with dramatick wonders; to exhibit in its highest elevation a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantick heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without enquiring the cause, and loves in spite of the obligations of justice, of re-
jection

jection by his mistress, and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity, and majestick madness: such as, if it is sometimes despised, is often revered, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.

In the Epilogue to the second part of the *Conquest of Granada*, Dryden indulges his favourite pleasure of discrediting his predecessors; and this Epilogue he has defended by a long postscript. He had promised a second dialogue, in which he should more fully treat of the virtues and faults of the English poets, who have written in the dramatick, epick, or lyrick way. This promise

was

was never formally performed; but, with respect to the dramatick writers, he has given us in his prefaces, and in this postscript, something equivalent; but his purpose being to exalt himself by the comparison, he shews faults distinctly, and only praises excellence in general terms.

A play thus written, in professed defiance of probability, naturally drew down upon itself the vultures of the theatre. One of the criticks that attacked it was *Martin Clifford*, to whom *Sprat* addressed the *Life of Cowley*, with such veneration of his critical powers as might naturally excite great expectations of instruction from his remarks. But let honest credulity be-
A
ware

ware of receiving characters from contemporary writers. Clifford's remarks, by the favour of Dr. *Piercy*, were at last obtained; and, that no man may ever want them more, I will extract enough to satisfy all reasonable desire.

In the first Letter, his observation is only general: "You do live, says he, "in as much ignorance and darkness "as you did in the womb: your "writings are like a Jack of all trades "shop; they have variety, but nothing "of value; and if thou art not the "dullest plant-animal that ever the earth "produced, all that I have conversed "with are strangely mistaken in thee"

In the second, he tells him that Almanzor is not more copied from Achilles
than

than from Ancient Pistol. “ But I am,
“ says he, strangely mistaken if I have
“ not seen this very *Almanzor* of your’s
“ in some disguise about this town, and
“ passing under another name. Pr’ythee
“ tell me true, was not this Huficap
“ once the *Indian Emperor*, and at ano-
“ ther time did he not call himself
“ *Maximin*? Was not *Lyndaraxa* once
“ called *Almeria*, I mean under *Monte-*
“ *suma* the Indian Emperor. I protest
“ and vow they are either the same, or
“ so alike that I cannot, for my heart,
“ distinguish one from the other. You
“ are therefore a strange unconscionable
“ thief; thou art not content to steal
“ from others, but dost rob thy poor
“ wretched self too.”

Now

Now was *Settle's* time to take his revenge. He wrote a vindication of his own lines; and, if he is forced to yield any thing, makes reprisals upon his enemy. To say that his answer is equal to the censure is no high commendation. To expose Dryden's method of analysing his expressions, he tries the same experiment upon the description of the ships in the *Indian Emperor*, of which however he does not deny the excellence; but intends to shew, that by studied misconstruction every thing may be equally represented as ridiculous. After so much of Dryden's elegant animadversions, justice requires that something of *Settle's* should be exhibited. The following observations are therefore

fore extracted from a quarto pamphlet
of ninety-five pages :

“ Fate after him below with pain did move,

“ And victory could scarce keep pace above.

“ These two lines, if he can shew

“ me any sense or thought in, or any

“ thing but bombast and noise, he shall

“ make me believe every word in his

“ observations on Morocco sense.

“ In the Empress of Morocco were these
“ lines :

“ I'll travel then to some remoter sphere,

“ Till I find out new worlds, and crown

“ you there.

“ On which Dryden made this remark :

“ I believe our learned author takes a

“ sphere for a country: the sphere of Mo-

“ rocco,

“ rocco, as if Morocco were the globe of
 “ earth and water; but a globe is no
 “ sphere neither, by his leave,” &c. So
 “ sphere must not be sense, unless it re-
 “ late to a circular motion about a
 “ globe, in which sense the astronomers
 “ use it. I would desire him to ex-
 “ pound these lines in Granada :

“ I’ll to the turrets of the palace go,
 “ And add new fire to those that fight be-
 “ low.

“ Thence, hero-like, with torches by my
 “ side,

“ (Far be the omen tho’) my Love I’ll
 “ guide.

o

“ No,

“ No, like his better fortune I’ll appear,
 “ With open arms, loose vail and flow-
 “ ing hair,
 “ Just flying forward from my rowling
 “ sphere.

“ I wonder, if he be so strict, how he
 “ dares make so bold with *sphere* him-
 “ self, and be so critical in other mens
 “ writings. Fortune is fancied standing
 “ on a globe, not on a *sphere*, as he told
 “ us, in the first Act.

“ Because *Elkanah’s Similies* are the
 “ most unlike things to what they are com-
 “ pared in the world, I’ll venture to
 “ start a simile in his *Annus Mirabilis*:
 “ he gives this poetical description of
 “ the ship called the *London*:

“ The

" *The goodly London in her gallant trim,*
 " *The Phenix-daughter of the vanquish't*
 " *old,*
 " *Like a rich bride does to the ocean swim,*
 " *And on her shadow rides in floating gold.*
 " *Her flag aloft spread ruffling in the*
 " *wind,*
 " *And sanguine streamers seem'd the flood*
 " *to fire:*
 " *The weaver, charm'd with what his loom*
 " *design'd,*
 " *Goes on to sea, and knows not to retire.*
 " *With roomy decks, her guns of mighty*
 " *strength,*
 " *Whose low-laid mouths each mounting*
 " *billow laves,*
 " *Deep in her draught, and warlike in her*
 " *length,*
 " *She seems a sea-wasp flying on the waves.*
 " *What*

“ What a wonderful pother is here, to
“ make all these poetical beautifications
“ of a ship! that is, a *phenix* in the first
“ stanza, and but a *wasp* in the last:
“ nay, to make his humble comparison
“ of a *wasp* more ridiculous, he does
“ not say it flies upon the waves—as
“ nimbly as a wasp, or the like, but it
“ seemed a *wasp*. But our author at
“ the writing of this was not in his al-
“ titudes, to compare ships to floating
“ palaces, a comparison to the purpose,
“ was a perfection he did not arrive to,
“ till his *Indian Emperor's* days. But
“ perhaps his similitude has more in it
“ than we imagine; this ship had a
“ great many guns in her, and they, put
“ all together, made the sting in the
“ wasp's

“ wasp’s tail : for this is all the reason

“ I can guess, why it seem’d a *wasp*.

“ But, because we will allow him all we

“ can to help out, let it be a *phenix sea-*

“ *wasp*, and the rarity of such an ani-

“ mal may do much towards the heigh-

“ tening the fancy.

“ It had been much more to his pur-

“ pose, if he had designed to render

“ the senseless play little, to have

“ searched for some such pedantry as

“ this :

“ *Two ifs scarce make one possibility.*

“ *If justice will take all and nothing give,*

“ *Justice, methinks, is not distributive.*

“ *To die or kill you, is the alternative,*

“ *Rather than take your life, I will not*

“ *live.*

“ Observe, how prettily our author
“ chops logick in heroick verse. Three
“ such fustian canting words as *distribu-*
“ *tive, alternative, and two ifs*, no man
“ but himself would have come within
“ the noise of. But he’s a man of ge-
“ neral learning, and all comes into his
“ play.

“ ’Twould have done well too, if he
“ could have met with a rant or two,
“ worth the observation: such as,
“ *Move swiftly, Sun, and fly a lover’s pace,*
“ *Leave months and weeks behind thee*
“ *in thy race.*

“ But surely the Sun, whether he flies
“ a lover’s or not a lover’s pace, leaves
“ weeks and months, nay years too, be-
“ hind him in his race.

“ Poor Robin, or any other of the
 “ Philomathematicks, would have given
 “ him satisfaction in the point.

“ *If I could kill thee now, thy fate's so low,*
 “ *That I must stoop, ere I can give the blow.*
 “ *But mine is fixt so far above thy crown,*
 “ *That all thy mer,*
 “ *Pil'd on thy back, can never pull it*
 “ *down.*

“ Now where that is, Almanzor's fate
 “ is fixt, I cannot guess; but wherever
 “ it is, I believe Almanzor, and think
 “ that all Abdalla's subjects, piled upon
 “ one another, might not pull down his
 “ fate so well as without piling: besides,
 “ I think Abdalla so wise a man, that
 “ if Almanzor had told him piling his
 “ men upon his back might do the feat,

“ he would scarce bear such a weight,
 “ for the pleasure of the exploit : but
 “ it is a huff, and let Abdalla do it, if
 “ he dare.

*The people like a headlong torrent go,
 And every dam they break or overflow.
 But, unoppos'd, they either lose their force,
 Or wind in volumes to their former course.*

“ A very pretty allusion, contrary to all
 “ sense or reason. Torrents, I take it,
 “ let them wind never so much, can
 “ never return to their former course,
 “ unless he can suppose that fountains
 “ can go upwards, which is impossible :
 “ nay more, in the foregoing page he
 “ tells us so too. A trick of a very un-
 “ faithful memory,

“ But

“ *But can no more than fountains upward*
 “ *flow.* ”

“ Which of a *torrent*, which signifies a
 “ rapid stream, is much more impossible.
 “ Besides, if he goes to quibble, and
 “ say that it is possible by art water
 “ may be made return, and the same
 “ water run twice in one and the same
 “ channel : then he quite confutes what
 “ he says ; for, it is by being opposed,
 “ that it runs into its former course : for
 “ all engines that make water so return,
 “ do it by compulsion and opposition.
 “ Or, if he means a headlong torrent
 “ for a tide, which would be ridicu-
 “ lous, yet they do not wind in volumes,
 “ but come fore-right back (if their
 “ upright lies straight to their former
 “ course),

“ course), and that by opposition of the
 “ sea-water, that drives them back
 “ again.

“ And for fancy, when he lights of
 “ any thing like it, 'tis a wonder if it be
 “ not borrowed. As here, for example
 “ of, I find this fanciful thought in his
 “ *Ann. Mirab.*

*Old father Thames rais'd up his reverend
 head;*

*But fear'd the fate of Simoeis would re-
 turn;*

Deep in his ooze he sought his sedgy bed;

And shrunk his waters back into his urn.

This is stolen from Cowley's *Davideis*,
 p. 9:

Swift

*Swift Jordan started, and strait backward
fled,*

Hiding amongst thick reeds his aged head.

*And when the Spaniards their assault
begin,*

*At once beat those without and those
within.*

“ This Almanzor speaks of himself; and
“ sure for one man to conquer an army
“ within the city, and another without
“ the city, at once, is something diffi-
“ cult; but this flight is pardonable, to
“ some we meet with in *Granada*. Of-
“ min, speaking of Almanzor :

*Who, like a tempest that outrides the
wind,*

Made a just battle, ere the bodies join'd.

“ Pray

“ Pray what does this honourable per-
 “ son mean by a *tempest that outrides the*
 “ *wind!* A tempest that outrides itself.
 “ To suppose a tempest without wind,
 “ is as bad as supposing a man to walk
 “ without feet : for if he supposes the
 “ tempest to be something distinct from
 “ the wind, yet as being the effect of
 “ wind only, to come before the cause
 “ is a little preposterous : so that, if he
 “ takes it one way, or if he takes it the
 “ other, those two *ifs* will scarce make
 “ one *possibility.*” Enough of Settle.

Marriage Alamode is a comedy, dedi-
 cated to the earl of Rochester ; whom
 he acknowledges not only as the de-
 fender of his poetry, but the promoter
 of

of his fortune. Langbaine places this play in 1673. The earl of Rochester therefore was the famous Wilmot, whom yet tradition always represents as an enemy to Dryden, and who is mentioned by him with some disrespect in the preface to Juvenal.

The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery, a comedy, was driven off the stage, *against the opinion*, as the author says, *of the best judges*. It is dedicated, in a very elegant address, to Sir Charles Sedley; in which he finds an opportunity for his usual complaint of hard treatment, and unreasonable censure.

Amboyna is a tiffue of mingled dialogue in verse and prose, and was perhaps written in less time than the *Virgin*

gin Martyr; though the author thought not fit either ostentatiously or mournfully to tell how little labour it cost him, or at how short a warning he produced it. It was a temporary performance, written in the time of the Dutch war, to inflame the nation against their enemies; to whom he hopes, as he declares in his Epilogue, to make his poetry not less destructive than that by which Tyrtæus of old animated the Spartans. This play was written in the second Dutch war in 1673.

Troilus and Cressida, is a play altered from Shakespeare; but so altered that even in Langbaine's opinion, *the last scene in the third act is a masterpiece*. It is introduced by a discourse on *the grounds*

grounds of criticism in tragedy; to which I suspect that Rymer's book had given occasion.

The *Spanish Fryar* is a tragi-comedy, eminent for the happy coincidence and coalition of the two plots. As it was written against the Papists, it would naturally at that time have friends and enemies; and partly by the popularity which it obtained at first, and partly by the real power both of the serious and risible part, it continued long a favourite of the publick.

It was Dryden's opinion, at least for some time, and he maintains it in the dedication of this play, that the drama required an alternation of comick and tragick scenes, and that it is necessary
to

to mitigate by alleviations of merriment the pressure of ponderous events, and the fatigue of toilsome passions. Whoever says he cannot perform both parts *is but half a writer for the stage.*

The *Duke of Guise*, a tragedy written in conjunction with Lee, as *Oedipus* had been before, seems to deserve notice only for the offence which it gave to the remnant of the Covenanters, and in general to the enemies of the court, who attacked him with great violence, and were answered by him; though at last he seems to withdraw from the conflict, by transferring the greater part of the blame or merit to his partner. It happened that a contract had been made between them, by which they were
to

to join in writing a play; and *he happened*, says Dryden, *to claim the promise just upon the finishing of a poem, when I would have been glad of a little respite.*—Two thirds of it belonged to him; and to me only the first scene of the play, the whole fourth act, and the first half or somewhat more of the fifth.

This was a play written professedly for the party of the duke of York, whose succession was then opposed. A parallel is intended between the Leaguers of France and the Covenanters of England; and this intention produced the controversy.

Albion and Albania is a musical drama, or opera, written, like the *Duke of Guise*, against the Republicans. With what

success it was performed, I have not found.

The State of Innocence and Fall of Man is termed by him an opera : it is rather a tragedy in heroick rhyme, but of which the personages are such as cannot decently be exhibited on the stage. Some such production was foreseen by Marvel, who writes thus to Milton :

Or if a work so infinite be spann'd,
 Jealous I was lest some less skilful hand,
 Such as disquiet always what is well,
 And by ill-imitating would excel,
 Might hence presume the whole crea-
 tion's day,

To change in scenes, and show it in a
 play.

It

It is another of his hasty productions; for the heat of his imagination raised it in a month.

This composition is addressed to the princess of Modena, then dutchess of York, in a strain of flattery which disgraces genius, and which it is wonderful that any man that knew the meaning of his own words could use without self-detestation. It is an attempt to mingle earth and heaven, by praising human excellence in the language of religion.

The preface contains an apology for heroick verse, and poetick licence; by which is meant not any liberty taken in contracting or extending words, but the use of bold fictions and ambitious figures.

The reason which he gives for printing what was never acted, cannot be overpassed: "I was induced to it in
"my own defence, many hundred copies of it being dispersed abroad
"without my knowledge or consent,
"and every one gathering new faults,
"it became at length a libel against
"me." These copies as they gathered faults were apparently manuscript; and he lived in an age very unlike ours, if many hundred copies of fourteen hundred lines were likely to be transcribed. An author has a right to print his own works, and needs not seek an apology in falsehood; but he that could bear to write the dedication felt no pain in writing the preface.

Aureng

Aureng Zebe is a tragedy founded on the actions of a great prince then reigning, but over nations not likely to employ their criticks upon the transactions of the English stage. If he had known and not liked his own character, our trade was not in those times secure from his resentment. His country is at such a distance, that the manners might be safely falsified, and the incidents feigned; for remoteness of place is remarked, by Racine, to afford the same conveniencies to a poet as length of time.

This play is written in rhyme; and has the appearance of being the most elaborate of all the dramas. The personages are imperial; but the dialogue

is often domestick, and therefore susceptible of sentiments accommodated to familiar incidents. The complaint of life is celebrated, and there are many other passages that may be read with pleasure.

This play is addressed to the earl of Mulgrave, afterwards duke of Buckingham, himself, if not a poet, yet a writer of verses, and a critick. In this address Dryden gave the first hints of his intention to write an epick poem. He mentions his design in terms so obscure, that he seems afraid lest his plan should be purloined, as, he says, happened to him when he told it more plainly in his preface to Juvenal. "The design," says he, "you know is great, the story English,"
"lish,

“lish, and neither too near the present
“times, nor too distant from them.”

All for Love, or the World well lost, a tragedy founded upon the story of Antony and Cleopatra, he tells us, *is the only play which he wrote for himself*; the rest were given to the people. It is by universal consent accounted the work in which he has admitted the fewest improprieties of style or character; but it has one fault equal to many, though rather moral than critical, that, by admitting the romantick omnipotence of Love, he has recommended as laudable and worthy of imitation that conduct which, through all ages, the good have censured as vitious, and the bad despised as foolish.

Of this play the prologue and the epilogue, though written upon the common topicks of malicious and ignorant criticism, and without any particular relation to the characters or incidents of the drama, are deservedly celebrated for their elegance and spriteliness.

Limberham, or the kind Keeper, is a comedy, which, after the third night, was prohibited as too indecent for the stage. What gave offence was in the printing, as the author says, altered or omitted. Dryden confesses that its indecency was objected to; but Langbaine, who yet seldom favours him, imputes its expulsion to resentment, because it *so much exposed the keeping part of the town.*

Oedipus

Oedipus is a tragedy formed by Dryden and Lee, in conjunction, from the works of Sophocles, Seneca, and Corneille. Dryden planned the scenes, and composed the first and third acts.

Don Sebastian is commonly esteemed either the first or second of his dramatick performances. It is too long to be all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and though it is not without fallies of frantick dignity, and more noise than meaning, yet as it makes approaches to the possibilities of real life, and has some sentiments which beam a strong impresson, it continued long to attract attention. Amidst the distresses of princes, and the vicissitudes of empire, are inserted several

veral scenes which the writer intended for comick; but which, I suppose, that age did not much commend, and this would not endure. There are, however, passages of excellence universally acknowledged; the dispute and the reconciliation of Dorax and Sebastian has always been admired.

This play was first acted in 1690, after Dryden had for some years discontinued dramattick poetry.

Amphitryon is a comedy derived from Plautus and Moliere. The dedication is dated Oct. 1690. This play seems to have succeeded at its first appearance; and was, I think, long considered as a very diverting entertainment.

Cleomenes is a tragedy, only remarkable as it occasioned an incident related in the *Guardian*, and allusively mentioned by Dryden in his preface. As he came out from the representation, he was accosted thus by some airy strippling: *Had I been left alone with a young beauty, I would not have spent my time like your Spartan.* That, Sir, said Dryden, *perhaps is true; but give me leave to tell you, that you are no hero.*

King Arthur is another opera. It was the last work that Dryden performed for King Charles, who did not live to see it exhibited; and it does not seem to have been ever brought upon the stage. In the dedication to the marquis of Halifax there is a very elegant
cha-

character of Charles, and a pleasing account of his latter life.

His last drama was *Love triumphant*, a tragi-comedy. In his dedication to the earl of Salisbury he mentions *the lowness of fortune to which he has voluntarily reduced himself, and of which he has no reason to be ashamed.*

This play appeared in 1694. It is said to have been unsuccessful. The catastrophe, proceeding merely from a change of mind, is confessed by the author to be defective. Thus he began and ended his dramattick labours with ill success.

From such a number of theatrical pieces it will be supposed, by most readers, that he must have improved his
for-

fortune; at least, that such diligence with such abilities must have set penury at defiance. But in Dryden's time the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouse was abhorred by the Puritans, and avoided by those who desired the character of seriousness or decency. A grave lawyer would have debased his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit, by appearing in those mansions of dissolute licentiousness. The profits of the theatre, when so many classes of the people were deducted from the audience, were not great; and the poet had for a long time but a single night. The first that had two nights was *Southern*, and the first

first that had three was *Rowe*. There were however, in those days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practise; and a play therefore seldom produced him more than a hundred pounds, by the accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy.

Almost every piece had a dedication, written with such elegance and luxuriance of praise, as neither haughtiness nor avarice could be imagined able to resist. But he seems to have made flattery too cheap. That praise is worth nothing of which the price is known.

To increase the value of his copies, he often accompanied his work with a preface of criticism; a kind of learning
then

then little known, and therefore welcome as a novelty, and of that flexible and applicable kind, that it might be always introduced without apparent violence or affectation. By these dissertations the publick judgement must have been much improved; and Swift, who conversed with Dryden, relates that he regretted the success of his own instructions, and found his readers made suddenly too skilful to be easily satisfied.

His prologues had such reputation, that for some time a play was considered as less likely to be well received, if some of his verses did not introduce it. The price of a prologue was two guineas, till being asked to write one for Mr. Southerne, he demanded three;

Not, said he, young man, out of disrespect to you, but the players have had my goods too cheap.

Though he declares, that in his own opinion his genius was not dramattick, he had great confidence in his own fertility ; for he is said to have engaged, by contract, to furnish four plays a year.

It is certain that in one year, 1678, he published *All for Love, Assignment*, two parts of the *Conquest of Granada*, *Sir Martin Marall*, and the *State of Innocence*, six complete plays ; with a celerity of performance, which, though all Langbaine's charges of plagiarism should be allowed, shews such facility of composition, such readiness of language, and such copiousness of sentiment,

ment, as, since the time of Lopez de Vega, perhaps no other author has possessed.

He did not enjoy his reputation, however great, nor his profits, however small, without molestation. He had criticks to endure, and rivals to oppose. The two most distinguished wits of the nobility, the duke of Buckingham and earl of Rochester, declared themselves his enemies.

Buckingham characterised him in 1671, by the name of *Bays* in the *Rehearsal*; a farce which he is said to have written with the assistance of Butler the author of *Hudibras*, Martin Clifford of the Charterhouse, and Dr. Sprat, the friend of Cowley, then his chap-

lain. Dryden and his friends laughed at the length of time and the number of hands employed upon this performance; in which, though by some artifice of action it yet keeps possession of the stage, it is not possible now to find any thing that might not have been written without so long delay, or a confederacy so numerous.

To adjust the minute events of literary history is tedious and troublesome; it requires indeed no great force of understanding, but often depends upon enquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand.

The *Rehearsal* was played in 1671, and yet is represented as ridiculing passages

sages in the *Conquest of Granada* and *Assignation*, which were not published till 1678, in *Marriage Alamode* published in 1673, and in *Tyrannick Love* of 1677. These contradictions shew how rashly satire is applied.

It is said that this farce was originally intended against Davenant, who in the first draught was characterised by the name of *Bilboa*. Davenant had been a soldier and an adventurer.

There is one passage in the *Rehearsal* still remaining, which seems to have related originally to Davenant. *Bays* hurts his nose, and comes in with brown paper applied to the bruise: how this affected Dryden does not appear. Davenant's nose had suffered such diminution by

mishaps among the women, that a patch upon that part evidently denoted him.

It is said likewise that Sir Robert Howard was once meant. The design was probably to ridicule the reigning poet, whoever he might be.

Much of the personal satire, to which it might owe its first reception, is now lost or obscured. *Bays* probably imitated the dress, and mimicked the manner, of Dryden; the cant words which are so often in his mouth may be supposed to have been Dryden's habitual phrases, or customary exclamations. *Bays*, when he is to write, is blooded and purged: this, as Lamotte relates himself to have heard, was the real practice of the poet.

There

There were other strokes in the *Rehearsal* by which malice was gratified: the debate between Love and Honour, which keeps prince *Volscius* in a single boot, is said to have alluded to the misconduct of the duke of Ormond, who lost Dublin to the rebels while he was toying with a mistress.

The earl of Rochester, to suppress the reputation of Dryden, took Settle into his protection, and endeavoured to persuade the publick that its approbation had been to that time misplaced. Settle was a while in high reputation: his *Empress of Morocco*, having first delighted the town, was carried in triumph to Whitehall, and played by the ladies of the court. Now was the poetical

meteor at the highest, the next moment began its fall. Rochester withdrew his patronage; seeming resolved, says one of his biographers, *to have a judgement contrary to that of the town*. Perhaps being unable to endure any reputation beyond a certain height, even when he had himself contributed to raise it.

Neither criticks nor rivals did Dryden much mischief, unless they gained from his own temper the power of vexing him, which his frequent bursts of resentment give reason to suspect. He is always angry at some past or afraid of some future censure; but he lessens the smart of his wounds by the balm of his own approbation, and endeavours to
repet

repel the shafts of criticism by opposing a shield of adamantine confidence.

The perpetual accusation produced against him was that of plagiarism, against which he never attempted any vigorous defence; for, though he was perhaps sometimes injuriously censured, he would by denying part of the charge have confessed the rest; and as his adversaries had the proof in their own hands, he, who knew that wit had little power against facts, wisely left in that perplexity which generality produces a question which it was his interest to suppress, and which, unless provoked by vindication, few were likely to examine.

Though the life of a writer, from about thirty-five to sixty-three, may be supposed to have been sufficiently busied by the composition of eight and twenty pieces for the stage, Dryden found room in the same space for many other undertakings.

But, how much soever he wrote, he was at least once suspected of writing more; for in 1679 a paper of verses, called *an Essay on Satire*, was shewn about in manuscript, by which the earl of Rochester, the dutchess of Portsmouth, and others, were so much provoked, that, as was supposed, for the actors were never discovered, they procured Dryden, whom they suspected as the author, to be waylaid and beaten.

This incident is mentioned by the duke of Buckinghamshire, the true writer, in his Art of Poetry; where he says of Dryden,

*Though prais'd and beaten for another's
rhymes,*

*His own deserves as great applause some-
times.*

His reputation in time was such, that his name was thought necessary to the success of every poetical or literary performance, and therefore he was engaged to contribute something, whatever it might be, to many publications. He prefixed the Life of Polybius to the translation of Sir Henry Sheers; and those of Lucian and Plutarch to versions of their works by different hands.

Of

Of the English Tacitus he translated the first book ; and, if Gordon be credited, translated it from the French. Such a charge can hardly be mentioned without some degree of indignation ; but it is not, I suppose, so much to be inferred that Dryden wanted the literature necessary to the perusal of Tacitus, as that, considering himself as hidden in a crowd, he had no awe of the publick ; and, writing merely for money, was contented to get it by the nearest way.

In 1680, the Epistles of Ovid being translated by the poets of the time, among which one was the work of Dryden, and another of Dryden and Lord Mulgrave, it was necessary to introduce them

them by a preface; and Dryden, who on such occasions was regularly summoned, prefixed a discourse upon translation, which was then struggling for the liberty that it now enjoys. Why it should find any difficulty in breaking the shackles of verbal interpretation, which must for ever debar it from elegance, it would be difficult to conjecture, were not the power of prejudice every day observed. The authority of Jonson, Sandys, and Holiday, had fixed the judgement of the nation; and it was not easily believed that a better way could be found than they had taken, though Denham, Waller, and Cowley, had tried to give examples of a different practice.

In 1681, Dryden became yet more conspicuous by uniting politicks with poetry, in the memorable satire called *Absalom and Achitophel*, written against the faction which, by lord Shaftesbury's incitement, set the duke of Monmouth at its head.

Of this poem, in which personal satire was applied to the support of publick principles, and in which therefore every mind was interested, the reception was eager, and the sale so large, that my father, an old bookfeller, told me, he had not known it equalled but by *Sacheverel's* trial.

The reason of this general perusal Addison has attempted to derive from the delight which the mind feels in the investi-

investigation of secrets; and thinks that curiosity to decypher the names procured readers to the poem. There is no need to enquire why those verses were read, which, to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the co-operation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment.

It could not be supposed that all the provocation given by Dryden would be endured without resistance or reply. Both his person and his party were exposed in their turns to the shafts of satire, which, though neither so well pointed nor perhaps so well aimed, undoubtedly drew blood.

One of these poems is called *Dryden's Satire on his Muse*; ascribed, though, as Pope says, falsely, to *Somers*, who was afterwards Chancellor. The poem, whose soever it was, has much virulence, and some spriteliness. The writer tells all the ill that he can collect, both of *Dryden* and his friends.

The poem of *Absalom and Achitophel* had two answers, now both forgotten; one called *Azaria and Hushai*; the other, *Absalom senior*. Of these hostile compositions, *Dryden* apparently imputes *Absalom senior* to *Settle*, by quoting in his verses against him the second line. *Azaria and Hushai* was, as *Wood* says, imputed to him, though it is somewhat unlikely that he should write twice on the

the same occasion. This is a difficulty which I cannot remove, for want of a minuter knowledge of poetical transactions.

The same year he published the *Medal*, of which the subject is a medal struck on lord Shaftesbury's escape from a prosecution, by the *ignoramus* of a grand jury of Londoners.

In both poems he maintains the same principles, and saw them both attacked by the same antagonist. Elkanah Settle, who had answered *Abraham*, appeared with equal courage in opposition to the *Medal*, and published an answer called *The Medal reversed*, with so much success in both encounters, that he left the palm doubtful, and divided the suffrages of the

the nation. Such are the revolutions of fame, or such is the prevalence of fashion, that the man whose works have not yet been thought to deserve the care of collecting them; who died forgotten in an hospital; and whose latter years were spent in contriving shows for fairs, and carrying an elegy or epithalamium, of which the beginning and end were occasionally varied, but the intermediate parts were always the same, to every house where there was a funeral or a wedding; might, with truth, have had inscribed upon his stone,

*Here lies the Rival and Antagonist of
Dryden.*

Settle was, for this rebellion, severely chastised by Dryden under the
name

name of *Doeg*, in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, and was perhaps for his factious audacity made the city poet, whose annual office was to describe the glories of the Mayor's day. Of these bards he was the last, and seems not much to have deserved even this degree of regard, if it was paid to his political opinions; for he afterwards wrote a panegyrick on the virtues of judge Jefferies, and what more could have been done by the meanest zealot for prerogative?

Of translated fragments, or occasional poems, to enumerate the titles, or settle the dates, would be tedious, with little use. It may be observed, that as Dryden's genius was commonly excited by some

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per-

personal regard, he rarely writes upon a general topick.

Soon after the accession of king James, when the design of reconciling the nation to the church of Rome became apparent, and the religion of the court gave the only efficacious title to its favours, Dryden declared himself a convert to popery. This at any other time might have passed with little censure. Sir *Kenelm Digby* embraced popery; the two *Rainolds* reciprocally converted one another; and *Chillingworth* himself was a while so entangled in the wilds of controversy, as to retire for quiet to an infallible church. If men of argument and study can find such difficulties, or such motives, as may
either

either unite them to the church of Rome, or detain them in uncertainty, there can be no wonder that a man, who perhaps never enquired why he was a protestant, should by an artful and experienced disputant be made a papist, overborn by the sudden violence of new and unexpected arguments, or deceived by a representation which shews only the doubts on one part, and only the evidence on the other.

That conversion will always be suspected that apparently concurs with interest. He that never finds his error till it hinders his progress towards wealth or honour, will not be thought to love Truth only for herself. Yet it may easily happen that information may come

at a commodious time; and as truth and interest are not by any fatal necessity at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are struggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are opposed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profession would perhaps have changed it before, with the like opportunities of instruction. This was then the state of popery; every artifice was used to shew it in its fairest form; and it must be owned to be a religion of external appearance sufficiently attractive.

It is natural to hope that a comprehensive is likewise an elevated soul, and that whoever is wise is also honest.

I am

I am willing to believe that Dryden, having employed his mind, active as it was, upon different studies, and filled it, capacious as it was, with other materials, came unprovided to the controversy, and wanted rather skill to discover the right than virtue to maintain it. But enquiries into the heart are not for man; we must now leave him to his Judge.

The priests, having strengthened their cause by so powerful an adherent, were not long before they brought him into action. They engaged him to defend the controversial papers found in the strong-box of Charles the Second, and, what yet was harder, to defend them against Stillingfleet.

With hopes of promoting popery, he was employed to translate Maimbourg's History of the League; which he published, with a large Introduction. His name is likewise prefixed to the English Life of Francis Xavier; but I know not that he ever owned himself the translator. Perhaps the use of his name was a pious fraud, which however seems not to have had much effect; for neither of the books, I believe, was ever popular.

The version of Xavier's Life is commended by Brown, in a pamphlet not written to flatter; and the occasion of it is said to have been, that the Queen, when she solicited a son, made vows to him as her tutelary saint.

He

He was supposed to have undertaken to translate *Varillas's History of Heresies*; and when *Burnet* published *Remarks* upon it, to have written an *Answer*; upon which *Burnet* makes the following observation :

“ I have been informed from Eng-
 “ land, that a gentleman, who is famous
 “ both for poetry and several other
 “ things, had spent three months in
 “ translating M. Varillas's History; but
 “ that, as soon as my Reflections ap-
 “ peared, he discontinued his labour,
 “ finding the credit of his author was
 “ gone. Now, if he thinks it is reco-
 “ vered by his Answer, he will perhaps
 “ go on with his translation; and this
 “ may be, for aught I know, as good

“ an entertainment for him as the con-
 “ versation thar he had set on between
 “ the Hinds and Panthers, and all the
 “ rest of animals, for whom M. Varil-
 “ las may serve well enough as an au-
 “ thor : and this history and that poem
 “ are such extraordinary things of their
 “ kind, that it will be but suitable to
 “ see the author of the worst poem be-
 “ come likewise the translator of the
 “ worst history that the age has pro-
 “ duced. If his grace and his wit im-
 “ prove both proportionably, he will
 “ hardly find that he has gained much
 “ by the change he has made, from
 “ having no religion to chuse one of
 “ the worst. It is true, he had some-
 “ what to sink from in matter of wit ;
 “ but

“ but as for his morals, it is scarce pos-
 “ sible for him to grow a worse man
 “ than he was. He has lately wreaked
 “ his malice on me for spoiling his three
 “ months labour ; but in it he has done
 “ me all the honour that any man can
 “ receive from him, which is to be
 “ railed at by him. If I had ill-nature
 “ enough to prompt me to wish a very
 “ bad wish for him, it should be, that
 “ he would go on and finish his transla-
 “ tion. By that it will appear, whether
 “ the English nation, which is the most
 “ competent judge in this matter, has,
 “ upon the seeing our debate, pro-
 “ nounced in M. Varillas’s favour, or in
 “ mine. It is true, Mr. D. will suffer
 “ a little by it ; but at least it will serve
 “ to

“ to keep him in from other extravagancies; and if he gains little honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so much by it as he has done by his last employment.”

Having probably felt his own inferiority in Theological controversy, he was desirous of trying whether, by bringing poetry to aid his arguments, he might become a more efficacious defender of his new profession. To reason in verse was, indeed, one of his powers; but subtilty and harmony united are still feeble, when opposed to truth.

Actuated therefore by zeal for Rome, or hope of fame, he published the *Hind and Panther*, a poem in which the church of
Rome,

Rome, figured by the *milk-white Hind*, defends her tenets against the church of England, represented by the *Panther*, a beast beautiful, but spotted.

A fable which exhibits two beasts talking Theology, appears at once full of absurdity; and it was accordingly ridiculed in the *City Mouse* and *Country Mouse*, a parody, written by Montague, afterwards earl of Halifax, and Prior, who then gave the first specimen of his abilities.

The conversion of such a man, at such a time, was not likely to pass uncensured. Three dialogues were published by the facetious *Thomas Brown*, of which the two first were called *Reasons of Mr. Bays's changing his religion*; and
the

the third *The Reasons of Mr. Hains the player's conversion and re-conversion*. The first was printed in 1688, the second not till 1690, the third in 1691. The clamour seems to have been long continued, and the subject to have strongly fixed the publick attention.

In the two first dialogues *Bays* is brought into the company of *Crites* and *Eugenius*, with whom he had formerly debated on dramattick poetry. The two talkers in the third are Mr. *Bays* and Mr. *Hains*.

Brown was a man not deficient in literature, nor destitute of fancy; but he seems to have thought it the pinnacle of excellence to be a *merry fellow*, and therefore laid out his powers upon
small

small jests or gross buffoonery, so that his performances have little intrinsic value, and were read only while they were recommended by the novelty of the event that occasioned them.

These dialogues are like his other works: what sense or knowledge they contain, is disgraced by the garb in which it is exhibited. One great source of pleasure is to call Dryden *little Bays*. *Ajax*, who happens to be mentioned, is *he that wore as many cowhides upon his shield as would have furnished half the king's army with shoe-leather*.

Being asked whether he has seen the *Hind and Panther*, Crites answers: *Seen it, Mr. Bays, why I can stir no where but it pursues me; it haunts me worse than a pewter-*

a pewter-buttoned serjeant does a decayed cit. Sometimes I meet it in a band-box, when my laundress brings home my linen; sometimes, whether I will or no, it lights my pipe at a coffee-house; sometimes it surprises me in a trunkmaker's shop; and sometimes it refreshes my memory for me on the backside of a Chancery-lane parcel. For your comfort too, Mr. Bays, I have not only seen it, as you may perceive, but have read it too, and can quote it as freely upon occasion as a frugal tradesman can quote that noble treatise the Worth of a Penny to his extravagant 'prentice, that revels in stewed apples, and penny custards.

The whole animation of these compositions arises from a profusion of ludicrous and affected comparisons. To

secure

secure one's chastity, says Bays, little more is necessary than to leave off a correspondence with the other sex, which, to a wise man, is no greater a punishment than it would be to a fanatick parson to be forbid seeing the Cheats and the Committee; or for my Lord Mayor and Aldermen to be interdicted the sight of the London Cuckold.—This is the general strain, and therefore I shall be easily excused the labour of more transcription.

Brown does not wholly forget past transactions: *You began, says Crites to Bays, with a very indifferent religion, and have not mended the matter in your last choice. It was but reason that your Muse, which appeared first in a Tyrant's quarrel,*
should

should employ her last efforts to justify the usurpations of the Hind.

Next year the nation was summoned to celebrate the birth of the Prince. Now was the time for Dryden to rouse his imagination, and strain his voice. Happy days were at hand, and he was willing to enjoy and diffuse the anticipated blessings. He published a poem, filled with predictions of greatness and prosperity; predictions of which it is not necessary to tell how they have been verified.

A few months passed after these joyful notes, and every blossom of popish hope was blasted for ever by the Revolution. A papist now could be no longer Laureat. The revenue, which he

had enjoyed with so much pride and praise, was transferred to Shadwel, an old enemy, whom he had formerly stigmatised by the name of *Og*. Dryden could not decently complain that he was deposed; but seemed very angry that Shadwel succeeded him, and has therefore celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem exquisitely satirical, called *Mac Fleckno*; of which the *Dunciad*, as Pope himself declares, is an imitation, though more extended in its plan, and more diversified in its incidents.

It is related by Prior, that Lord Dorset, when, as chamberlain, he was constrained to eject Dryden from his office, gave him from his own purse an allow-

ance equal to the salary. This is no romantick or incredible act of generosity; an hundred a year is often enough given to claims less cogent, by men less famed for liberality. Yet Dryden always represented himself as suffering under a publick infliction; and once particularly demands respect for the patience with which he endured the loss of his little fortune. His patron might, indeed, enjoin him to suppress his bounty; but if he suffered nothing, he should not have complained.

During the short reign of king James he had written nothing for the stage, being, in his own opinion, more profitably employed in controversy and flattery. Of praise he might perhaps
have

have been less lavish without inconvenience, for James was never said to have much regard for poetry: he was to be flattered only by adopting his religion.

Times were now changed: Dryden was no longer the court-poet, and was to look back for support to his former trade; and having waited about two years, either considering himself as discountenanced by the publick, or perhaps expecting a second revolution, he produced *Don Sebastian*, in 1690; and in the next four years four dramas more.

In 1693 appeared a new version of Juvenal and Persius. Of Juvenal he translated the first, third, sixth, tenth,

and sixteenth satires; and of Persius the whole work. On this occasion he introduced his two sons to the publick, as nurselings of the Muses. The fourteenth of Juvenal was the work of John, and the seventh of Charles Dryden. He prefixed a very ample preface in the form of a dedication to lord Dorset; and there gives an account of the design which he had once formed to write an epick poem on the actions either of Arthur or the Black Prince. He considered the epick as necessarily including some kind of supernatural agency, and had imaged a new kind of contest between the guardian angels of kingdoms, of whom he conceived that each might be represented zealous for
his

his charge, without any intended opposition to the purposes of the Supreme Being, of which all created minds must in part be ignorant.

This is the most reasonable scheme of celestial interposition that ever was formed. The surprizes and terrors of enchantments, which have succeeded to the intrigues and oppositions of pagan deities, afford very striking scenes, and open a vast extent to the imagination; but, as Boileau observes, and Boileau will be seldom found mistaken, with this incurable defect, that in a contest between heaven and hell we know at the beginning which is to prevail; for this reason we follow Rinaldo to the enchanted wood with more curiosity than terror.

In the scheme of Dryden there is one great difficulty, which yet he would perhaps have had address enough to surmount. In a war justice can be but on one side; and to entitle the hero to the protection of angels, he must fight in the defence of indubitable right. Yet some of the celestial beings, thus opposed to each other, must have been represented as defending guilt.

That this poem was never written, is reasonably to be lamented. It would doubtless have improved our numbers and enlarged our language, and might perhaps have contributed by pleasing instruction to rectify our opinions, and purify our manners.

What

What he required as the indispensable condition of such an undertaking, a publick stipend, was not likely in those times to be obtained. Riches were not become familiar to us, and the nation had not yet learned to be liberal.

This plan he charged Blackmore with stealing; only, says he, *the guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage.*

In 1694, he began the most laborious and difficult of all his works, the translation of Virgil; from which he borrowed two months, that he might turn Fresnoy's Art of Painting into English prose. The preface, which he boasts to have written in twelve mornings, ex-

hibits a parallel of poetry and painting, with a miscellaneous collection of critical remarks, such as cost a mind flored like his no labour to produce them.

In 1697, he published his version of the works of Virgil; and, that no opportunity of profit might be lost, dedicated the Pastorals to the lord Clifford, the Georgics to the earl of Chesterfield, and the Eneid to the earl of Mulgrave. This œconomy of flattery, at once lavish and discreet, did not pass without observation.

This translation was censured by Milbourne, a clergyman, stiled by Pope *the fairest of criticks*, because he exhibited his own version to be compared with that which he condemned.

His

His last work was his Fables, published in 1699, in consequence, as is supposed, of a contract now in the hands of Mr. Tonson; by which he obliged himself, in consideration of three hundred pounds, to finish for the press ten thousand verses.

In this volume is comprised the well-known ode on St. Cecilia's day, which, as appeared by a letter communicated to Dr. Birch, he spent a fortnight in composing and correcting. But what is this to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whose *Equivoque*, a poem of only three hundred forty-six lines, took from his life eleven months to write it, and three years to revise it!

Part of this book of Fables is the first Iliad in English, intended as a specimen of a version of the whole. Considering into what hands Homer was to fall, the reader cannot but rejoice that this project went no further.

The time was now at hand which was to put an end to all his schemes and labours. On the first of May 1701, having been some time, as he tells us, a cripple in his limbs, he died in Gerrard-street of a mortification in his leg.

There is extant a wild story relating to some vexatious events that happened at his funeral, which, at the end of Congreve's Life, by a writer of I know not what credit, are thus related, as I find

find the account transferred to a biographical dictionary :

“ Mr. Dryden dying on the Wednesday morning, Dr. Thomas Sprat, then bishop of Rochester and dean of Westminster, sent the next day to the lady Elizabeth Howard, Mr. Dryden’s widow, that he would make a present of the ground, which was forty pounds, with all the other Abbey-fees. The lord Hallifax likewise sent to the lady Elizabeth, and Mr. Charles Dryden her son, that, if they would give him leave to bury Mr. Dryden, he would inter him with a gentleman’s private funeral, and afterwards bestow five hundred pounds on a monument in the Abbey ; which, as they had no
“ reason

“ reason to refuse, they accepted. On
 “ the Saturday following the company
 “ came ; the corpse was put into a vel-
 “ vet hearse, and eighteen mourning
 “ coaches, filled with company, at-
 “ tended. When they were just ready
 “ to move, the lord Jefferies, son of the
 “ lord chancellor Jefferies, with some of
 “ his rakish companions coming by,
 “ asked whose funeral it was : and being
 “ told Mr. Dryden’s, he said, “ What
 “ shall Dryden, the greatest honour and
 “ ornament of the nation, be buried
 “ after this private manner ! No, gen-
 “ tlemen, let all that loved Mr. Dryden,
 “ and honour his memory, alight and
 “ join with me in gaining my lady’s
 “ consent to let me have the honour
 “ of

“ of his interment, which shall be after
 “ another manner than this ; and I will
 “ bestow a thousand pounds on a monu-
 “ ment in the Abbey for him.” The
 “ gentlemen in the coaches, not know-
 “ ing of the bishop of Rochester’s fa-
 “ vour, nor of the lord Hallifax’s ge-
 “ nerous design (they both having, out
 “ of respect to the family, enjoined the
 “ lady Elizabeth and her son to keep
 “ their favour concealed to the world,
 “ and let it pass for their own expence),
 “ readily came out of the coaches, and
 “ attended lord Jefferies up to the lady’s
 “ bedside, who was then sick : he re-
 “ peated the purport of what he had
 “ before said ; but she absolutely re-
 “ fusing, he fell on his knees, vowing
 “ never

“ never to rise till his request was
 “ granted. The rest of the company
 “ by his desire kneeled also; and the
 “ lady, being under a sudden surprize,
 “ fainted away. As soon as she reco-
 “ vered her speech, she cried, *No, no.*
 “ Enough, gentlemen, replied he; my
 “ lady is very good, she says, *Go, go.*”
 “ She repeated her former words with
 “ all her strength, but in vain; for her
 “ feeble voice was lost in their accla-
 “ mations of joy; and the lord Jefferies
 “ ordered the hearfemen to carry the
 “ corps to Mr. Ruffel’s, an undertaker’s
 “ in Cheapfide, and leave it there till he
 “ should fend orders for the embalment,
 “ which, he added, should be after the
 “ royal manner. His directions were
 “ obeyed,

“ obeyed, the company disperfed, and
 “ lady Elizabeth and her fon remained
 “ inconfolable. The next day Mr.
 “ Charles Dryden waited on the lord
 “ Hallifax and the bifhop, to excufe his
 “ mother and himfelf, by relating the
 “ real truth. But neither his lordfhip
 “ nor the bifhop would admit of any
 “ plea; efpecially the latter, who had
 “ the Abbey lighted, the ground open-
 “ ed, the choir attending, an anthem
 “ ready fet, and himfelf waiting for fome
 “ time without any corpf to bury. The
 “ undertaker, after three days expec-
 “ tance of orders for embalment with-
 “ out receiving any, waited on the lord
 “ Jefferies; who, pretending ignorance
 “ of the matter, turned it off with an
 “ ill-

“ ill-natured jest, saying, That those
 “ who observed the orders of a drunken
 “ frolick deserved no better; that he
 “ remembered nothing at all of it; and
 “ that he might do what he pleased with
 “ the corpse. Upon this, the under-
 “ taker waited upon the lady Elizabeth
 “ and her son, and threatned to bring
 “ the corpse home, and set it before the
 “ door. They desired a day’s respite,
 “ which was granted. Mr. Charles Dry-
 “ den wrote a handsome letter to the
 “ lord Jefferies, who returned it with
 “ this cool answer, “ That he knew
 “ nothing of the matter, and would be
 “ troubled no more about it.” He then
 “ addressed the lord Hallifax and the
 “ bishop of Rochester, who absolutely
 “ re.

“ refused to do any thing in it. In this
 “ distress Dr. Garth sent for the corpse
 “ to the College of Physicians, and pro-
 “ posed a funeral by subscription, to
 “ which himself set a most noble exam-
 “ ple. At last a day, about three weeks
 “ after Mr. Dryden’s decease, was ap-
 “ pointed for the interment: Dr. Garth
 “ pronounced a fine Latin oration, at
 “ the College, over the corpse; which
 “ was attended to the Abbey by a nu-
 “ merous train of coaches. When the
 “ funeral was over, Mr. Charles Dryden
 “ sent a challenge to the lord Jefferies,
 “ who refusing to answer it, he sent se-
 “ veral others, and went often himself;
 “ but could neither get a letter deli-
 “ vered, nor admittance to speak to
 k “ him:

"him: which so incensed him, that he
 "resolved, since his lordship refused to
 "answer him like a gentleman, that he
 "would watch an opportunity to meet,
 "and fight off-hand, though with all
 "the rules of honour; which his lord-
 "ship hearing, left the town: and Mr.
 "Charles Dryden could never have the
 "satisfaction of meeting him, though
 "he fought it till his death with the
 "utmost application."

This story I once intended to omit, as
 it appears with no great evidence; but
 having been since informed that there
 is in the register of the College of Phy-
 sicians an order relating to Dryden's
 funeral, I can doubt its truth no longer.

The

The gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the process, appears great when different times, and those not very distant, are compared. If at this time a young drunken Lord should interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he would be jostled out of the way, and compelled to be quiet? If he should thrust himself into a house, he would be sent roughly away; and what is yet more to the honour of the present time, I believe, that those who had subscribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not, for such an accident, have withdrawn their contributions.

He was buried among the poets in Westminster Abbey, where, though the duke of Newcastle had, in a general dedication prefixed by Congreve to his dramatick works, accepted thanks for his intention of erecting him a monument, he lay long without distinction, till the duke of Buckinghamshire gave him a tablet, inscribed only with the name of DRYDEN.

He married the lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the earl of Berkshire, with circumstances, according to the satire imputed to lord Somers, not very honourable to either party: by her he had three sons, Charles, John, and Henry. Charles was usher of the palace to pope Clement the XIth, and visiting
Eng-

England in 1704, was drowned in an attempt to swim cross the Thames at Windsor.

John was author of a comedy called *The Husband his own Cuckold*. He is said to have died at Rome. Henry entered into some religious order. It is some proof of Dryden's sincerity in his second religion, that he taught it to his sons. A man conscious of hypocritical profession in himself, is not likely to convert others; and as his sons were qualified in 1693 to appear among the translators of Juvenal, they must have been taught some religion before their father's change.

Of the person of Dryden I know not any account; of his mind, the portrait which has been left by Congreve, who knew him with great familiarity, is such as adds our love of his manners to our admiration of his genius. "He was," we are told, "of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate, ready to forgive injuries, and capable of a sincere reconciliation with those that had offended him. His friendship, where he professed it, went beyond his professions. He was of a very easy, of very pleasing access; but somewhat slow, and, as it were, diffident in his advances to others: he had that in his nature which abhorred intrusion into any society whatever. He was there-

“therefore less known, and consequent-
 “ly his character became more liable
 “to misapprehensions and misrepresen-
 “tations: he was very modest, and very
 “easily to be discouraged in his
 “approaches to his equals or superiors..
 “As his reading had been very exten-
 “sive, so was he very happy in a me-
 “mory tenacious of every thing that
 “he had read. He was not more pos-
 “sessed of knowledge than he was com-
 “municative of it; but then his com-
 “munication was by no means pedan-
 “tick, or imposed upon the conversa-
 “tion, but just such, and went so far
 “as, by the natural turn of the conver-
 “sation in which he was engaged, it
 k 4 “ was

“ was necessarily promoted or required.

“ He was extreme ready, and gentle

“ in his correction of the errors of any

“ writer who thought fit to consult him,

“ and full as ready and patient to admit

“ of the reprehensions of others, in re-

“ spect of his own oversights or mis-

“ takes.”

To this account of Congreve nothing can be objected but the fondness of friendship; and to have excited that fondness in such a mind is no small degree of praise. The disposition of Dryden, however, is shewn in this character rather as it exhibited itself in cursory conversation, than as it operated on the more important parts of life. His plaeability

cability and his friendship indeed were solid virtues; but courtesy and good-humour are often found with little real worth. Since Congreve, who knew him well, has told us no more, the rest must be collected as it can from other testimonies, and particularly from those notices which Dryden has very liberally given us of himself.

The modesty which made him so slow to advance, and so easy to be repulsed, was certainly no suspicion of deficient merit, or unconsciousness of his own value: he appears to have known, in its whole extent, the dignity of his character, and to have set a very high value on his own powers and performances. He probably did not offer his conversation,

tion, because he expected it to be solicited; and he retired from a cold reception, not submissive but indignant, with such reverence of his own greatness as made him unwilling to expose it to neglect or violation.

His modesty was by no means inconsistent with ostentatiousness: he is diligent enough to remind the world of his merit, and expresses with very little scruple his high opinion of his own powers; but his self-commendations are read without scorn or indignation; we allow his claims, and love his frankness.

Tradition, however, has not allowed that his confidence in himself exempted him from jealousy of others. He is accused of envy and insidiousness; and

is particularly charged with inciting Creech to translate Horace, that he might lose the reputation which Lucretius had given him.

Of this charge we immediately discover that it is merely conjectural; the purpose was such as no man would confess; and a crime that admits no proof, why should we believe?

He has been described as magisterially presiding over the younger writers, and assuming the distribution of poetical fame; but he who excels has a right to teach, and he whose judgement is incontestable may, without usurpation, examine and decide.

Congreve represents him as ready to advise and instruct; but there is reason

to believe that his communication was rather useful than entertaining. He declares of himself that he was saturnine, and not one of those whose spritely sayings diverted company; and one of his censurers makes him say,
 Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay;

To writing bred, I knew not what to say.

There are men whose powers operate only at leisure and in retirement, and whose intellectual vigour deserts them in conversation; whom merriment confuses, and objection disconcerts; whose bashfulness restrains their exertion, and suffers them not to speak till the time of speaking is past; or whose attention

to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been considered, and cannot be recalled.

Of Dryden's sluggishness in conversation it is vain to search or to guess the cause. He certainly wanted neither sentiments nor language; his intellectual treasures were great, though they were locked up from his own use. *His thoughts, when he wrote, flowed in upon him so fast, that his only care was which to chuse, and which to reject.* Such rapidity of composition naturally promises a flow of talk, yet we must be content to believe what an enemy says of him, when he likewise says it of himself. But whatever was his character as a

com-

companion, it appears that he lived in familiarity with the highest persons of his time. It is related by Carte of the duke of Ormond, that he used often to pass a night with Dryden, and those with whom Dryden conformed: who they were, Carte has not told; but certainly the convivial table at which Ormond sat was not surrounded with a plebeian society. He was indeed reproached with boasting of his familiarity with the great; and Horace will support him in the opinion, that to please superiours is not the lowest kind of merit.

The merit of pleasing must, however, be estimated by the means. Favour is not always gained by good actions or
laudable

laudable qualities. Caresses and preferments are often bestowed on the auxiliaries of vice, the procurers of pleasure, or the flatterers of vanity. Dryden has never been charged with any personal agency unworthy of a good character: he abetted vice and vanity only with his pen. One of his enemies has accused him of lewdness in his conversation; but if accusation without proof be credited, who shall be innocent?

His works afford too many examples of dissolute licentiousness, and abject adulation; but they were probably, like his merriment, artificial and constrained; the effects of study and meditation, and his trade rather than his pleasure.

Of the mind that can trade in corruption, and can deliberately pollute itself with ideal wickedness for the sake of spreading the contagion in society, I wish not to conceal or excuse the depravity.—Such degradation of the dignity of genius, such abuse of superlative abilities, cannot be contemplated but with grief and indignation. What consolation can be had, Dryden has afforded, by living to repent, and to testify his repentance.

Of dramatick immorality he did not want examples among his predecessors, or companions among his contemporaries; but in the meanness and servility of hyperbolical adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which
the

the Roman emperors were deified, he has been ever equalled, except by Afra Behn in an address to Eleanor Gwyn. When once he has undertaken the task of praise, he no longer retains shame in himself, nor supposes it in his patron. As many odoriferous bodies are observed to diffuse perfumes from year to year, without sensible diminution of bulk or weight, he appears never to have impoverished his mint of flattery by his expences, however lavish. He had all the forms of excellence, intellectual and moral, combined in his mind, with endless variation; and when he had scattered on the hero of the day the golden shower of wit and virtue, he had ready for him, whom he

1

wished

wished to court on the morrow, new wit and virtue with another stamp. Of this kind of meanness he never seems to decline the practice, or lament the necessity: he considers the great as entitled to encomiastick homage, and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift, more delighted with the fertility of his invention than mortified by the prostitution of his judgement. It is indeed not certain, that on these occasions his judgement much rebelled against his interest. There are minds which easily sink into submission, that look on grandeur with undistinguishing reverence, and discover no defect where there is elevation of rank and affluence of riches.

With his praises of others and of himself is always intermingled a strain of discontent and lamentation, a fullen growl of resentment, or a querulous murmur of distress. His works are undervalued, his merit is unrewarded, and *he has few thanks to pay his stars that he was born among Englishmen.* To his critics he is sometimes contemptuous, sometimes resentful, and sometimes submissive. The writer who thinks his works formed for duration, mistakes his interest when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by shewing that he was affected by their censures, and gives lasting importance to names, which, left to themselves, would vanish from remembrance. From

this principle Dryden did not oft depart; his complaints are, for the greater part, general; he seldom pollutes his page with an adverse name. He condescended indeed to a controversy with Settle, in which he perhaps may be considered rather as assaulting than repelling; and since Settle has sunk into oblivion, his libel remains injurious only to himself.

Among answers to criticks, no poetical attacks, or altercations, are to be included: they are, like other poems, effusions of genius, produced as much to obtain praise as to obviate censure. These Dryden practised, and in these he excelled.

Of Collier, Blackmore, and Milbourne, he has made mention in the preface to his Fables. To the censure of Collier, whose remarks may be rather termed admonitions than criticisms, he makes little reply; being, at the age of sixty-eight, attentive to better things than the claps of a playhouse. He complains of Collier's rudeness, and the *horse-play of his raillery*; and asserts that *in many places he has perverted by his glosses the meaning of what he censures*; but in other things he confesses that he is justly taxed; and says, with great calmness and candour, *I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts or expressions of mine that can be truly accused of obscenity, immorality, or profaneness, and retract them.*

If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, he will be glad of my repentance. Yet, as our best dispositions are imperfect, he left standing in the same book a reflection on Collier of great asperity, and indeed of more asperity than wit,

Blackmore he represents as made his enemy by the poem of *Absalom and Achitophel*, which *he thinks a little hard upon his fanatick patrons*; and charges him with borrowing the plan of his *Arthur* from the preface to Juvenal, *though he had*, says he, *the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor, but instead of it to traduce me in a libel*,

The libel in which Blackmore traduced him was a *Satire upon Wit*; in
which,

which, having lamented the exuberance
of false wit and the deficiency of true,
he proposes that all wit should be re-
coined before it is current, and appoints
masters of assay who shall reject all that
is light or debased,

'Tis true, that when the coarse and
worthless dross

Is purg'd away, there will be mighty
loss;

Ev'n Congreve, Southern, manly Wy-
cherly,

When thus refin'd, will grievous suf-
f'ers be;

Into the melting-pot when Dryden
comes,

What horrid stench will rise, what
noisome fumes!

How will he shrink, when all his lewd
allay,

And wicked mixture, shall be purg'd
away?

Thus stands the passage in the last edition; but in the original there was an abatement of the censure, beginning thus:

But what remains will be so pure, 'twill
bear

Th' examination of the most severe.

Blackmore finding the censure resented, and the civility disregarded, ungenerously omitted the softer part. Such variations discover a writer who consults his passions more than his virtue; and it may be reasonably supposed that Dryden imputes his enmity to its true cause.

Of Milbourne he wrote only in general terms, such as are always ready at the call of anger, whether just or not: a short extract will be sufficient. *He pretends a quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul upon priesthood; if I have, I am only to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his share of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisfied that he shall never be able to force himself upon me for an adversary; I condemn him too much to enter into competition with him.*

As for the rest of those who have written against me, they are such scoundrels that they deserve not the least notice to be taken of them. Blackmore and Milbourne are only distinguished from the crowd by being remembered to their infamy.

Dryden

Dryden indeed discovered, in many of his writings, an affected and absurd malignity to priests and priesthood, which naturally raised him many enemies, and which was sometimes as unreasonably resented as it was exerted. Trapp is angry that he calls the sacrificer in the *Georgicks* the *holy butcher*; the translation is indeed ridiculous; but Trapp's anger arises from his zeal, not for the author, but the priest; as if any reproach of the follies of paganism could be extended to the preachers of truth.

Dryden's dislike of the priesthood is imputed by Langbaine, and I think by Brown, to a repulse which he suffered when he solicited ordination; but he denies,

denies, in the preface to his Fables, that he ever designed to enter into the church; and such a denial he would not have hazarded, if he could have been convicted of falsehood.

Malevolence to the clergy is seldom at a great distance from irreverence of religion, and Dryden affords no exception to this observation. His writings exhibit many passages, which, with all the allowance that can be made for characters and occasions, are such as piety would not have admitted, and such as may vitiate light and unprincipled minds. But there is no reason for supposing that he disbelieved the religion which he disobeyed. He forgot his duty rather than disowned it. His tendency
to

to profaneness is the effect of levity, negligence, and loose conversation, with a desire of accommodating himself to the corruption of the times, by venturing to be wicked as far as he durst. When he professed himself a convert to Popery, he did not pretend to have received any new conviction of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

The persecution of criticks was not the worst of his vexations; he was much more disturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are so frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakness sinking in helpless misery, or the indignation of merit claiming its tribute from mankind, that it is impossible not to detest the age which
could

could impose on such a man the necessity of such solicitations, or not to despise the man who could submit to such solicitations without necessity.

Whether by the world's neglect, or his own imprudence, I am afraid that the greatest part of his life was passed in exigencies. Such outcries were surely never uttered but in severe pain. Of his supplies or his expences no probable estimate can now be made. Except the salary of the Laureate, to which king James added the office of Historiographer, perhaps with some additional emoluments, his whole revenue seems to have been casual; and it is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal,

liberal, and they that trust her promises make little scruple of revelling to-day on the profits of the morrow.

Of his plays the profit was not great, and of the produce of his other works very little intelligence can be had. By discoursing with the late amiable Mr. Tonson, I could not find that any memorials of the transactions between his predecessor and Dryden had been preserved, except the following papers :

“ I do hereby promise to pay John
 “ Dryden, Esq; or order, on the 25th
 “ of March 1699, the sum of two hun-
 “ dred and fifty guineas, in considera-
 “ tion of ten thousand verses, which
 “ the said John Dryden Esq; is to de-
 “ liver

“ liver to me Jacob Tonson, when
 “ finished, whereof seven thousand five
 “ hundred verses, more or less, are al-
 “ ready in the said Jacob Tonson’s pos-
 “ session. And I do hereby farther pro-
 “ mise, and engage myself, to make up
 “ the said sum of two hundred and fifty
 “ guineas three hundred pounds ster-
 “ ling to the said John Dryden, Esq;
 “ his executors, administrators, or as-
 “ signs, at the beginning of the second
 “ impression of the said ten thousand
 “ verses.

“ In witness whereof I have hereunto
 “ set my hand and seal, this 20th day of
 “ March, 169³.

“ Jacob Tonson.

“ Sealed

“ Sealed and delivered, being first
 “ stampd, pursuant to the acts of
 “ parliament for that purpose, in
 “ the presence of

“ Ben. Portlock.

“ Will. Congreve.”

“ March 24th, 1698,

“ Received then of Mr. Jacob Tonson
 “ the sum of two hundred sixty-eight
 “ pounds fifteen shillings, in pursuance
 “ of an agreement for ten thousand
 “ verses, to be delivered by me to the
 “ said Jacob Tonson, whereof I have al-
 “ ready delivered to him about seven
 “ thousand five hundred, more or less;
 “ he the said Jacob Tonson being obliged
 “ to make up the foresaid sum of two
 “ hun-

“ hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen
 “ shillings three hundred pounds, at the
 “ beginning of the second impression of
 “ the foresaid ten thousand verses;

“ I say, received by me

“ John Dryden.

“ Witness Charles Dryden.”

Two hundred and fifty guineas, at
 1 l. 1 s. 6 d. is 268 l. 15 s.

It is manifest from the dates of this
 contract, that it relates to the volume of
 Fables, which contains about twelve
 thousand verses, and for which therefore
 the payment must have been afterwards
 enlarged.

I have been told of another letter yet
 remaining, in which he desires Tonson

to bring him money, to pay for a watch which he had ordered for his son, and which the maker would not leave without the price.

The inevitable consequence of poverty is dependence. Dryden had probably no recourse in his exigencies but to his bookseller. The particular character of Tonson I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much less liberal in those times than in our own; their views were narrower, and their manners groffer. To the mercantile ruggedness of that race, the delicacy of the poet was sometimes exposed. Lord Bolingbroke, who in his youth had cultivated poetry, related to Dr. King of Oxford, that one day, when he

visited

visited Dryden, they heard, as they were
 conversing, another person entering the
 house. " This, said Dryden, is Ton-
 " son. You will take care not to de-
 " part before he goes away ; for I have
 " not completed the sheet which I pro-
 " mised him ; and if you leave me un-
 " protected, I must suffer all the rude-
 " ness to which his resentment can
 " prompt his tongue."

What rewards he obtained for his
 poems, besides the payment of the book-
 seller, cannot be known : Mr. Derrick,
 who consulted some of his relations,
 was informed that his Fables obtained
 five hundred pounds from the dutches-
 of Ormond ; a present not unsuitable
 to the magnificence of that splendid fa-

mily; and he quotes Moyle, as relating that forty pounds were paid by a musical society for the use of *Alexander's Feast*.

In those days the œconomy of government was yet unsettled, and the payments of the Exchequer were dilatory and uncertain: of this disorder there is reason to believe that the Laureat sometimes felt the effects; for in one of his prefaces he complains of those, who, being intrusted with the distribution of the Prince's bounty, suffer those that depend upon it to languish in penury.

Of his petty habits or slight amusements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men whom I have found

to whom he was personally known, one told me that at the house which he frequented, called Wills's Coffee-house, the appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him; and the other related, that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.

Of one opinion he is very reasonably suspected, which will do him no honour in the present age, though in his own time, at least in the beginning of it, he was far from having it confined to himself. There is little doubt that he put

confidence in the prognostications of judicial astrology. In the Appendix to the Life of Congreve is a narrative of some of his predictions wonderfully fulfilled; but I know not the writer's means of information, or character of veracity; and, without authority, it is useless to mention what is so unlikely to be true. That he had the configurations of the planets in his mind, and considered them as influencing the affairs of men, he does not forbear to hint.

The utmost malice of the stars is
past.—

Now

Now frequent *trines* the happier lights
among,

And *high-rais'd Jove*, from his dark
prison freed,

Those weights took off that on his
planet hung,

Will gloriously the new-laid works
succeed.

He has elsewhere shewn his attention
to the planetary powers; and in the
preface to his Fables has endeavoured
obliquely to justify his superstition, by
attributing the same to some of the
Ancients.

So slight and so scanty is the know-
ledge which I have been able to collect
concerning the private life and domestick

manners of a man, whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critick and a poet.



DRYDEN may be properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled, and rarely deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.

Two *Arts of English Poetry* were written in the days of Elizabeth by Webb and Puttenham, from which something might be learned, and a few hints had been given by Jonson and Cowley; but Dryden's *Essay on Dramatick Poetry* was the first regular treatise on the art of writing.

He who, having formed his opinions in the present age of English literature, turns back to peruse this dialogue, will not perhaps find much increase of knowledge, or much novelty of instruction; but he is to remember that critical principles were then in the hands of a few, who had gathered them partly from the Ancients, and partly from the Italians and French. The structure of
I dra-

dramatick poems was not then generally understood. Audiences, applauded by instinct, and poets perhaps often pleased by chance.

A writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practised, the first teacher is forgotten. Learning once made popular is no longer learning; it has the appearance of something which we have bestowed upon ourselves, as the dew appears to rise from the field which it refreshes.

To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of

his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time was difficult at another. Dryden at least imported his science, and gave his country what it wanted before ; or rather, he imported only the materials, and manufactured them by his own skill.

The dialogue on the Drama was one of his first essays of criticism, written when he was yet a timorous candidate for reputation, and therefore laboured with that diligence which he might allow himself somewhat to remit, when his name gave sanction to his positions, and his awe of the public was abated, partly by custom, and partly by success. It will not be easy to find, in all the
 opu-

opulence of our language, a treatise so artfully variegated with successive representations of opposite probabilities, so enlivened with imagery, so brightened with illustrations. His portraits of the English dramatists are wrought with great spirit and diligence. The account of Shakespeare may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastick criticism; exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration. The praise lavished by Longinus, on the attestation of the heroes of Maranthon, by Demosthenes, fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character, so extensive in its comprehension, and so curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminished, or reformed; nor can the edi-

tors

tors and admirers of Shakespeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased this epitome of excellence, of having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value though of greater bulk.

In this, and in all his other essays on the same subject, the criticism of Dryden is the criticism of a poet; not a dull collection of theorems, nor a rude detection of faults, which perhaps the censor was not able to have committed; but a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction, and where the author proves his right of judgement, by his power of performance.

The

The different manner and effect with which critical knowledge may be conveyed, was perhaps never more clearly exemplified than in the performances of Rymer and Dryden. It was said of a dispute between two mathematicians, “*malim cum Scaligero errare, quam cum Clavio recte sapere;*” that *it was more eligible to go wrong with one than right with the other.* A tendency of the same kind every mind must feel at the perusal of Dryden’s prefaces and Rymer’s discourses. With Dryden we are wandering in quest of Truth; whom we find, if we find her at all, drest in the graces of elegance; and if we miss her, the labour of the pursuit rewards itself; we are led only through

through fragrance and flowers: Rymer, without taking a nearer, takes a rougher way; every step is to be made through thorns and brambles; and Truth, if we meet her, appears repulsive by her mien, and ungraceful by her habit. Dryden's criticism has the majesty of a queen; Rymer's has the ferocity of a tyrant.

As he had studied with great diligence the art of poetry, and enlarged or rectified his notions, by experience perpetually increasing, he had his mind stored with principles and observations; he poured out his knowledge with great liberality, and seldom published any work without a critical dissertation, by which he encreased the book and the price,

price, with little labour to himself; for of labour, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his productions, there is sufficient reason to suspect that he was not a lover. To write *con amore*, with fondness for the employment, with perpetual touches and retouches, with unwillingness to take leave of his own idea, and an unwearied pursuit of unattainable perfection, was, I think, no part of his character.

His Criticism may be considered as general or occasional. In his general precepts, which depend upon the nature of things and the structure of the human mind, he may doubtless be safely recommended to the confidence of the reader; but his occasional and particu-

lar

lar positions were sometimes interested,
 sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious. It is not without reason that Trapp, speaking of the praises which he bestows on Palamon and Arcite, says,
 “ Novimus judicium Drydeni de poemate quodam *Chauceri*, pulchro sane illo, et admodum laudando, nimirum quod non modo vere epicum sit, sed Iliada etiam atque Æneada æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo iudice id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ manibus habet, & in quo nunc occupatur.”

He is therefore by no means constant to himself. His defence and desertion of dramattick rhyme is generally known. *Spence*, in his remarks on Pope's *Odyfsey*, produces what he thinks an unconquerable quotation from Dryden's preface to the *Eneid*, in favour of translating an epick poem into blank verse; but he forgets that when his author attempted the *Iliad*, some years afterwards, he departed from his own decision, and again translated into rhyme.

When he has any objection to obviate, or any license to defend, he is not very scrupulous about what he asserts, nor very cautious, if the present purpose be served, not to entangle himself

self in his own sophistries. But when all arts are exhausted, like other hunted animals, he sometimes stands at bay; as he cannot disown the grossness of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that prescribes morality to a comick poet.

His remarks on ancient or modern writers are not always to be trusted. His parallel of the versification of Ovid with that of Claudian has been very justly censured by *Sewel*. His comparison of the first line of Virgil with the first of Statius is not happier. Virgil, he says, is soft and gentle, and would have thought Statius mad if he had heard him thundering out

Quæ superimposito moles geminata
colosso.

Statius perhaps heats himself, as he proceeds, to exaggerations somewhat hyperbolical; but undoubtedly Virgil would have been too hasty, if he had condemned him to straw for one sounding line. Dryden wanted an instance, and the first that occurred was imprest into the service.

What he wishes to say, he says at hazard; he cited *Gorbuduc*, which he had never seen; gives a false account of *Chapman's* versification; and discovers, in the preface to his Fables, that he translated the first book of the Iliad, without knowing what was in the second.

It will be difficult to prove that Dryden ever made any great advances in literature. As having distinguished himself

at Westminster under the tuition of Busby, who advanced his scholars to a height of knowledge very rarely attained in grammar-schools, he resided afterwards at Cambridge, it is not to be supposed that his skill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common students; but his scholastick acquisitions seem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illustrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books, and those such as lie in the beaten track of regular study; from which if ever he departs, he is in danger of losing himself in unknown regions.

In his Dialogue on the Drama, he pronounces with great confidence that the Latin tragedy of Medea is not Ovid's, because it is not sufficiently interesting and pathetick. He might have determined the question upon surer evidence; for it is quoted by Quintilian as the work of Seneca; and the only line which remains of Ovid's play, for one line is left us, is not there to be found. There was therefore no need of the gravity of conjecture, or the discussion of plot or sentiment, to find what was already known upon higher authority than such discussions can ever reach.

His literature, though not always free from ostentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own

by the art of dressing it ; or superficial, which, by what he gives, shews what he wanted ; or erroneous, hastily collected, and negligently scattered.

Yet it cannot be said that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languishes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and sparkle with illustrations. There is scarcely any science or faculty that does not supply him with occasional images and lucky similitudes ; every page discovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full possession of great stores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much, it is natural to suppose that he has read with diligence ; yet I rather

believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digestion; by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice, and a habit of reflection that suffered nothing useful to be lost. A mind like Dryden's, always curious, always active, to which every understanding was proud to be associated, and of which every one solicited the regard, by an ambitious display of himself, had a more pleasant, perhaps a nearer, way to knowledge than by the silent progress of solitary reading. I do not suppose that he despised books,

books, or intentionally neglected them; but that he was carried out, by the impetuosity of his genius, to more vivid and speedy instructors; and that his studies were rather desultory and fortuitous than constant and systematical.

It must be confessed that he scarcely ever appears to want book-learning but when he mentions books; and to him may be transferred the praise which he gives his master Charles.

His conversation, wit, and parts,
His knowledge in the noblest useful arts,
Were such, dead authors could not give,
But habitudes of those that live;
Who, lighting him, did greater lights
receive :

He

He drain'd from all, and all they
 knew,
 His apprehension quick, his judgement
 true :
 That the most learn'd with shame confess
 His knowledge more, his reading only
 less.

Of all this, however, if the proof be demanded, I will not undertake to give it; the atoms of probability, of which my opinion has been formed, lie scattered over all his works; and by him who thinks the question worth his notice, his works must be perused with very close attention.

Criticism, either didactick or defensive, occupies almost all his prose, except

cept those pages which he has devoted to his patrons ; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled ; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid ; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous ; what is little, is gay ; what is great, is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently ; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Every thing is excused by the play of images and the spriteliness of expression.

Though

Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh; and though, since his earlier works, more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.

He who writes much, will not easily escape a manner, such a recurrence of particular modes as may be easily noted. Dryden is always *another and the same*, he does not exhibit a second time the same elegancies in the same form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. His style could not easily be imitated, either seriously or ludicrously, for being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative cha-

characters. The beauty who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance.

From his prose however, Dryden derives only his accidental and secondary praise; the veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English Literature, is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English Poetry.

After about half a century of forced thoughts, and rugged metre, some advances towards nature and harmony had been already made by Waller and Denham; they had shewn that long discourses
in

in rhyme grew more pleasing when they were broken into couplets, and that verse consisted not only in the number but the arrangement of syllables.

But though they did much, who can deny that they left much to do? Their works were not many, nor were their minds of very ample comprehension. More examples of more modes of composition were necessary for the establishment of regularity, and the introduction of propriety in word and thought.

Every language of a learned nation necessarily divides itself into diction scholastic and popular, grave and familiar, elegant and gross; and from a nice distinction of these different parts, arises
a great

a great part of the beauty of stile. But if we except a few minds, the favourites of nature, to whom their own original rectitude was in the place of rules, this delicacy of selection was little known to our authors; our speech lay before them in a heap of confusion, and every man took for every purpose what chance might offer him.

There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestick use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily

readily receive strong impressions, or delightful images, and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should convey to things.

Those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose, had been rarely attempted; we had few elegancies or flowers of speech, the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble, or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another.

It may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have over-born the prejudices which had long prevailed, and which even then were sheltered by the protection of Cowley. The new versification, as it was called, may be considered

considered as owing its establishment to Dryden; from whose time it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness.

The affluence and comprehension of our language is very illustriously displayed in our poetical translations of Ancient Writers; a work which the French seem to relinquish in despair, and which we were long unable to perform with dexterity. Ben Jonson thought it necessary to copy Horace almost word by word; Feltham, his contemporary and adversary, considers it as indispensably requisite in a translation to give line for line. It is said that Sandys, whom Dryden calls the best versifier of the last age,

age, has struggled hard to comprise every book of his English Metamorphoses in the same number of verses with the original. Holyday had nothing in view but to shew that he understood his author, with so little regard to the grandeur of his diction, or the volubility of his numbers, that his metres can hardly be called verses; they cannot be read without reluctance, nor will the labour always be rewarded by understanding them. Cowley saw that such *copyers* were a *servile race*; he asserted his liberty, and spread his wings so boldly that he left his authors. It was reserved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us just rules and examples of translation.

When

When languages are formed upon different principles, it is impossible that the same modes of expression should always be elegant in both. While they run on together, the closest translation may be considered as the best; but when they divaricate, each must take its natural course. Where correspondence cannot be obtained, it is necessary to be content with something equivalent. *Translation therefore, says Dryden, is not so loose as paraphrase, nor so close as metaphor.*

All polished languages have different styles; the concise, the diffuse, the lofty, and the humble. In the proper choice of style consists the resemblance which Dryden principally exacts from

the translator. He is to exhibit his author's thoughts in such a dress of diction as the author would have given them, had his language been English: rugged magnificence is not to be softened: hyperbolical ostentation is not to be repressed, nor sententious affectation to have its points blunted. A translator is to be like his author; it is not his business to excel him.

The reasonableness of these rules seem sufficient for their vindication; and the effects produced by observing them were so happy, that I know not whether they were ever opposed but by Sir Edward Sherburne, a man whose learning was greater than his powers of poetry; and who, being better qualified to give

2

the

the meaning than the spirit of Seneca, has introduced his version of three tragedies by a defence of close translation. The authority of Horace, which the new translators cited in defence of their practice, he has, by a judicious explanation, taken fairly from them; but reason wants not Horace to support it.

It seldom happens that all the necessary causes concur to any great effect: will is wanting to power, or power to will, or both are impeded by external obstructions. The exigencies in which Dryden was condemned to pass his life, are reasonably supposed to have blasted his genius, to have driven out his works in a state of immaturity, and

to have intercepted the full-blown elegance which longer growth would have supplied.

Poverty, like other rigid powers, is sometimes too hastily accused. If the excellence of Dryden's works was lessened by his indigence, their number was increased; and I know not how it will be proved, that if he had written less he would have written better; or that indeed he would have undergone the toil of an author, if he had not been solicited by something more pressing than the love of praise.

But as is said by his Sebastian,

*What had been, is unknown; what is,
appears.*

We

We know that Dryden's several productions were so many successive expedients for his support ; his plays were therefore often borrowed, and his poems were almost all occasional.

In an occasional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fertile in itself, and however stored with acquisitions. He whose work is general and arbitrary, has the choice of his matter, and takes that which his inclination and his studies have best qualified him to display and decorate. He is at liberty to delay his publication, till he has satisfied his friends and himself ; till he has reformed his first thoughts by subsequent examination ; and polished away those faults

which the precipitance of ardent composition is likely to leave behind it. Virgil is related to have poured out a great number of lines in the morning, and to have passed the day in reducing them to fewer.

The occasional poet is circumscribed by the narrowness of his subject. Whatever can happen to man has happened so often, that little remains for fancy or invention. We have been all born; we have most of us been married; and so many have died before us, that our deaths can supply but few materials for a poet. In the fate of princes the publick has an interest; and what happens to them of good or evil, the poets have always considered as business for the Muse.

Muse. But after so many inaugural gratulations, nuptial hymns, and funeral dirges, he must be highly favoured by nature, or by fortune, who says any thing not said before. Even war and conquest, however splendid, suggest no new images; the triumphal chariot of a victorious monarch can be decked only with those ornaments that have graced his predecessors.

Not only matter but time is wanting. The poem must not be delayed till the occasion is forgotten. The lucky moments of animated imagination cannot be attended; elegancies and illustrations cannot be multiplied by gradual accumulation; the composition must be dispatched while conversation is yet busy, and

and admiration fresh; and haste is to be made, lest some other event should lay hold upon mankind.

Occasional compositions may however secure to a writer the praise both of learning and facility; for they cannot be the effect of long study, and must be furnished immediately from the treasures of the mind.

The death of Cromwel was the first publick event which called forth Dryden's poetical powers. His heroick stanzas have beauties and defects; the thoughts are vigorous, and though not always proper, shew a mind replete with ideas; the numbers are smooth, and the diction if not altogether correct, is elegant and easy.

Davenant seems at this time to have been his favourite author, though Gondibert never appears to have been popular; and from Davenant he learned to please his ear with the stanza of four lines alternately rhymed.

Dryden very early formed his versification: there are in this early production no traces of Donne's or Jonson's ruggedness; but he did not so soon free his mind from the ambition of forced conceits. In his verses on the Restoration, he says of the King's exile,

He, tofs'd by Fate—

Could taste no sweets of youth's desired
age,

But found his life too true a pilgrimage.

And

And afterwards, to shew how virtue and wisdom are increased by adversity, he makes this remark :

Well might the ancient poets then confer

On Night the honour'd name of coun-
sellor,

Since, struck with rays of prosperous fortune blind,

We light alone in dark afflictions find.

His praise of Monk's dexterity comprises such a cluster of thoughts unal-
lied to one another, as will not else-
where be easily found :

'Twas Monk, whom Providence design'd
to loose

Those real bonds false freedom did im-
pose.

The

The blessed saints that watch'd this turn-
ing scene,

Did from their stars with joyful wonder
lean,

To see small clues draw vastest weights
along,

Not in their bulk but in their order
strong.

Thus pencils can by one slight touch
restore

Smiles to that changed face that wept
before.

With ease such foud chimæras we pur-
sue,

As fancy frames for fancy to subdue :

But when ourselves to action we betake,

It shuns the mint like gold that chymists
make :

How

How hard was then his task, at once to
be

What in the body natural we see !

Man's Architect distinctly did ordain

The charge of muscles, nerves, and of
the brain ;

Thro' viewless conduits spirits to dispense

The springs of motion from the seat of
sense.

'Twas not the hasty product of a day,

But the well-ripen'd fruit of wise delay.

He, like a patient angler, ere he strook,

Would let them play a-while upon the
hook.

Our healthful food the stomach labours

thus,

At first embracing what it straight doth
crush.

voll

Wife

Wife leaches will not vain receipts ob-
trude,
While growing pains pronounce the hu-
mours crude;
Deaf to complaints, they wait upon the
ill,
Till some safe crisis authorize their skill.

He had not yet learned, indeed he
never learned well, to forbear the im-
proper use of mythology. After having
rewarded the heathen deities for their
care,

With *Alga* who the sacred altar strows?
To all the sea-gods Charles an offering
owes;

A bull to thee, Portunus, shall be slain;
A ram to you, ye Tempests of the Main.

He

He tells us, in the language of religion,
 Prayer storm'd the skies, and ravish'd
 Charles from thence,
 As heav'n itself is took by violence.

And afterwards mentions one of the most
 awful passages of Sacred History.

Other conceits there are, too curious
 to be quite omitted; as,

For by example most we sinn'd before,
 And, glass-like, clearness mix'd with
 frailty bore.

How far he was yet from thinking it
 necessary to found his sentiments on
 Nature, appears from the extravagance
 of his fictions and hyperboles :

The winds, that never moderation knew,
 Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew;

Or,

Or, out of breath with joy, could not
enlarge
Their straiten'd lungs.—

It is no longer motion cheats your view;
As you meet it, the land approacheth
you;

The land returns, and in the white it
wears

The marks of penitence and sorrow
bears.

I know not whether this fancy, how-
ever little be its value, was not bor-
rowed. A French poet read to Mal-
herbe some verses, in which he repre-
sents France as moving out of its place
to receive the King. "Though this,"
said Malherbe, "was in my time, I do
"not remember it."

His poem on the *Coronation* has a more even tenour of thought. Some lines deserve to be quoted :

You have already quench'd fedition's
brand,
And zeal that burnt it, only warms the
land;
The jealous sects that durst not trust
their cause
So far from their own will as to the laws,
Him for their umpire and their synod
take,
And their appeal alone to Cæsar make.

Here may be found one particle of that old versification, of which, I believe, in all his works, there is not another :

Nor is it duty, or our hope alone,
Creates that joy, but full *fruition*.

In the verses to the lord chancellor Clarendon, two years afterwards, is a conceit so hopeles at the first view, that few would have attempted it; and so successfully laboured, that though at last it gives the mind more perplexity than pleasure, and seems hardly worth the study that it costs, yet it must be valued as a proof of a mind at once subtle and comprehensive :

In open prospect nothing bounds our eye,
Until the earth seems join'd unto the
sky :

So in this hemisphere our outmost view
Is only bounded by our king and you :
Our sight is limited where you are join'd,
And beyond that no farther heav'n can
find.

So well your virtues do with his agree,
That, tho' your orbs of different greatness be,

Yet both are for each other's use dispos'd,
His to enclose, and your's to be enclos'd.
Nor could another in your room have
been,

Except an emptiness had come between.

The comparison of the Chancellor to
the Indies leaves all resemblance too far
behind it :

And as the Indies were not found before
Those rich perfumes which from the
happy shore

The winds upon their balmy wings convey'd,

Whose guilty sweetness first their world

So

So by your counsels we are brought to
view

A new and undiscover'd world in you.

There is another comparison, for there is little else in the poem, of which, though perhaps it cannot be explained into plain prosaick meaning, the mind perceives enough to be delighted, and readily forgives its obscurity for its magnificence :

How strangely active are the arts of peace,
Whose restless motions less than wars do
cease !

Peace is not freed from labour, but from
noise ;

And war more force, but not more pains
employs :

214 D R Y D E N.

Such is the mighty swiftneſs of your
mind,

That, like the earth's, it leaves our ſenſe
behind,

While you ſo ſmoothly turn and rowl
our ſphere,

That rapid motion does but reſt appear.

For as in nature's ſwiftneſs, with the
throng

Of flying orbs while our's is born along,

All ſeems at reſt to the deluded eye,

Mov'd by the ſoul of the ſame harmony :

So carry'd on by our unwearied care,

We reſt in peace, and yet in motion ſhare.

To this ſucceed four lines, which per-
haps afford Dryden's firſt attempt at thoſe
penetrating remarks on human nature,
for

for which he seems to have been peculiarly formed:

Let envy then those crimes within you
see,

From which the happy never must be
free;

Envy that does with misery reside,
The joy and the revenge of ruin'd pride.

Into this poem he seems to have collected all his powers; and after this he did not often bring upon his anvil such stubborn and unmalleable thoughts; but, as a specimen of his abilities to unite the most unfociable matter, he has concluded with lines, of which I think not myself obliged to tell the meaning:

Yet unimpair'd with labours, or with
time,

Your age but seems to a new youth to
climb.

Thus heav'nly bodies do our time beget,
And measure change, but share no part
of it:

And still it shall without a weight increase,
Like this new year, whose motions never
cease.

For since the glorious course you have
begun

Is led by Charles, as that is by the sun,
It must both weightless and immortal
prove,

Because the centre of it is above.

In the *Annus Mirabilis* he returned to
the quatrain, which from that time he
totally

totally quitted, perhaps from this experience of its inconvenience. This is one of his greatest attempts. He had subjects equal to his abilities, a great naval war, and the Fire of London. Battles have always been described in heroic poetry; but a sea-fight and artillery had yet something of novelty. New arts are long in the world before poets describe them; for they borrow everything from their predecessors, and commonly derive very little from nature or from life. Boileau was the first French writer that had ever hazarded in verse the mention of modern war, or the effects of gunpowder. We, who are less afraid of novelty, had already possession of those dreadful images: Waller had

de

described a sea-fight. Milton had not yet transferred the invention of fire-arms to the rebellious angels.

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully answer the expectation raised by such subjects and such a writer. With the stanza of Davenant he has sometimes his vein of parenthesis, and incidental disquisition, and stops his narrative for a wise remark.

The general fault is, that he affords more sentiment than description, and does not so much impress scenes upon the fancy, as deduce consequences and make comparisons.

The initial stanzas have rather too much resemblance to the first lines of
Waller's

Waller's poem on the war with Spain ;
perhaps such a beginning is natural,
and could not be avoided without affect-
tation. Both Waller and Dryden might
take their hint from the poem on the
civil war of Rome, *Orbem jam totum, &c.*

Of the king collecting his navy, he
says,

It seems as every ship their sovereign
knows,

His awful summons they so soon obey ;

So hear the scaly herds when Proteus
blows,

And so to pasture follow through the sea.

It would not be hard to believe that
Dryden had written the two first lines
seriously, and that some wag had added
the

the two latter in burlesque. Who would expect the lines that immediately follow, which are indeed perhaps indecently hyperbolical, but certainly in a mode totally different?

To see this fleet upon the ocean move,
 Angels drew wide the curtains of the
 skies ;

And heaven, as if there wanted lights
 above,

For tapers made two glaring comets
 rise.

The description of the attempt at Bergen will afford a very compleat specimen of the descriptions in this poem :

And

And now approach'd their fleet from India fraught,

With all the riches of the rising sun :
And precious sand from southern climates brought,

The fatal regions where the war begun.
Like hunted castors, conscious of their store,

Their way-laid wealth to Norway's coast they bring :

Then first the North's cold bosom spices bore,

And winter brooded on the eastern spring.

By the rich scent we found our perfum'd prey,

Which, flank'd with rocks, did close in covert lie :

And

And round about their murdering cannon lay,

At once to threaten and invite the eye.

Fiercer than cannon, and than rocks more hard,

The English undertake th' unequal war:

Seven ships alone, by which the port is barr'd,

Besiege the Indies, and all Denmark dare.

These fight like husbands, but like lovers those :

These fain would keep, and those more fain enjoy:

And to such height their frantic passion grows,

That what both love, both hazard to destroy.

Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a
ball,

And now their odours arm'd against
them fly :

Some preciously by shatter'd porcelain
fall,

And some by aromatic splinters die.

And tho' by tempests of the prize bereft,
In heaven's inclemency some ease we
find :

Our foes we vanquish'd by our valour
left,

And only yielded to the seas and wind.

In this manner is the sublime too
often mingled with the ridiculous. The
Dutch seek a shelter for a wealthy fleet :
this surely needed no illustration, yet
they

they must fly, not like all the rest of mankind on the same occasion, but *like hunted castors*; and they might with strict propriety be hunted; for we winded them by our noses—their *per-fumes* betrayed them. The *Husband* and the *Lover*, though of more dignity than the *Castor*, are images too domestick to mingle properly with the horrors of war. The two quatrains that follow are worthy of the author.

The account of the different sensations with which the two fleets retired, when the night parted them, is one of the fairest flowers of English poetry.

The night comes on, we eager to pursue
The combat still, and they asham'd to
leave:

'Till

Till the last streaks of dying day with-
drew,

And doubtful moon-light did our rage
deceive.

In th' English fleet each ship resounds
with joy,

And loud applause of their great leader's
fame :

In fiery dreams the Dutch they still de-
stroy,

And, slumbering, smile at the imagin'd
flame.

Not so the Holland fleet, who, tir'd and
done,

Stretch'd on their decks like weary oxen
lie;

Faint sweats all down their mighty mem-
bers run,

(Vast bulks which little souls but ill
supply.)

In dreams they fearful precipices tread,
 Or, shipwreck'd, labour to some distant
 shore :
 Or, in dark churches, walk among the
 dead ;
 They wake with horror, and dare sleep
 no more.

It is a general rule in poetry, that all appropriated terms of art should be sunk in general expressions, because poetry is to speak an universal language. This rule is still stronger with regard to arts not liberal, or confined to few, and therefore far removed from common knowledge ; and of this kind, certainly, is technical navigation. Yet Dryden was of opinion that a sea-fight ought to be described in the nautical language ; *and*

certainly, says he, as those who in a logical disputation keep to general terms would hide a fallacy, so those who do it in any poetical description would veil their ignorance.

Let us then appeal to experience; for by experience at last we learn as well what will please as what will profit. In the battle, his terms seem to have been blown away; but he deals them liberally in the dock:

So here some pick out bullets from the
fides,
Some drive old *okum* thro' each seam
and rift:
Their left-hand does the *calking* iron
guide,
The rattling mallet with the right they
lift.

With boiling pitch another near at
hand

(From friendly Sweden brought) the
seams instops :

Which, well laid o'er, the salt-sea waves
withstand,

And shake them from the rising beak
in drops.

Some the *gall'd* ropes with dawby
marling bind,

Or fear-cloth masts with strong *tar-*
parveling coats :

To try new *shrouds* one mounts into
the wind,

And one below, their ease or stiffness
notes.

I suppose here is not one term which
every reader does not wish away.

His

His digression to the original and progress of navigation, with his prospect of the advancement which it shall receive from the Royal Society, then newly instituted, may be considered as an example seldom equalled of seasonable excursion and artful return.

One line, however, leaves me discontented; he says, that, by the help of the philosophers,

Instructed ships shall sail to quick commerce,

By which remotest regions are allied.—

Which he is constrained to explain in a note, *By a more exact measure of longitude.* It had better become Dryden's learning and genius to have laboured science

into poetry, and have shewn, by explaining longitude, that verse did not refuse the ideas of philosophy.

His description of the Fire is painted by resolute meditation, out of a mind better formed to reason than to feel. The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant distress, is one of the most dreadful spectacles which this world can offer to human eyes; yet it seems to raise little emotion in the breast of the poet; he watches the flame coolly from street to street, with now a reflection, and now a simile, till at last he meets the king, for whom he makes a speech, rather tedious in a time so busy; and then follows again the progress of the fire.

There

There are, however, in this part some passages that deserve attention ; as in the beginning.

The diligence of trades and noiseſul gain.

And luxury more late aſleep were laid ;

All was the night's, and in her ſilent reign

No ſound the reſt of Nature did invade

In this deep quiet —

The expreſſion *All was the night's* is taken from Seneca, who remarks on Virgil's line,

Omnia noctis erant placida compoſta quiete,

that he might have concluded better,
Omnia noctis erant.

The following quatrain is vigorous and animated.

The ghosts of traytors from the bridge
descend
With bold fanatick spectres to rejoice ;
About the fire into a dance they bend
And sing their sabbath notes with feeble
voice.

His prediction of the improvements which shall be made in the new city is elegant and poetical, and, with an event which Poets cannot always boast, has been happily verified. The poem concludes with a simile that might have better been omitted.

Dryden, when he wrote this poem, seems not yet fully to have formed his versification, or settled his system of propriety.

From

From this time, he addicted himself almost wholly to the stage, *to which*, says he, *my genius never much inclined me*, merely as the most profitable market for poetry. By writing tragedies in rhyme he continued to improve his diction and his numbers. According to the opinion of *Harte*, who had studied his works with great attention, he settled his principles of versification in 1676, when he produced the play of *Aureng Zeb*; and according to his own account of the short time in which he wrote *Tyrannick Love*, and the *State of Innocence*, he soon obtained the full effect of diligence, and added facility to exactness.

Rhyme has been so long banished from the theatre, that we know not its
effect

effect upon the passions of an audience ; but it has this convenience, that sentences stand more independent on each other, and striking passages are therefore easily selected and retained. Thus the description of Night in the *Indian Emperor*, and the rise and fall of empire in the *Conquest of Granada* are more frequently repeated than any lines in *All for Love*, or *Don Sebastian*.

To search his plays for vigorous sallies, and sententious elegancies, or to fix the dates of any little pieces which he wrote by chance, or by solicitation, were labour too tedious and minute.

His dramatic labours did not so wholly absorb his thoughts but that he promulgated the laws of translation in a
 preface

preface to the English Epistles of Ovid, one of which he translated himself, and another in conjunction with the Earl of Mulgrave.

Abfalom and Achitophel is a work fo well known, that particular criticism is fuperfluous. If it be confidered as a poem political and controverfial, it will be found to comprife all the excellencies of which the fubject is fufceptible; acrimony of censure, elegance of praife, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigour of fentiment, happy turns of language and pleafing harmony of numbers; and all thefe raifed to fuch a height as can fcarcely be found in any other English compofition.

It

It is not, however, without faults; some lines are inelegant or improper, and too many are irreligiously licentious. The original structure of the poem was defective; allegories drawn to great length will always break; Charles could not run continually parallel with David.

The subject had likewise another inconvenience: it admitted little imagery or description, and a long poem of mere sentiments easily becomes tedious; though all the parts are forcible, and every line kindles new rapture, the reader, if not relieved by the interposition of something that fooths the fancy, grows weary of admiration, and defers the rest.

As

As an approach to historical truth was necessary, the action and catastrophe were not in the poet's power; there is therefore an unpleasing disproportion between the beginning and the end. We are alarmed by a faction formed out of many sects various in their principles, but agreeing in their purpose of mischief, formidable for their numbers and strong by their supports, while the king's friends are few and weak. The chiefs on either part are set forth to view; but when expectation is at the height, the king makes a speech, and

Henceforth a series of new times began.

Who can forbear to think of an enchanted castle, with a wide moat and

lofty battlements, walls of marble, and gates of brass, which vanishes at once into air, when the destined knight blows his horn before it?

In the second part, written by *Tate*, there is a long insertion, which for poignancy of satire, exceeds any part of the former. Personal resentment, though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a busy prompter.

The *Medal*, written upon the same principles with *Absalom and Achitophel*, but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character or incident

dent cannot furnish as many ideas, as a series of events, or multiplicity of agents. This poem therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor perhaps generally understood, yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire. The picture of a man whose propensions to mischief are such, that his best actions are but inability of wickedness, is very skilfully delineated and strongly coloured.

Power was his aim: but thrown from
that pretence,

The wretch turn'd loyal in his own
defence,

And malice reconcil'd him to his
Prince.

Him,

Him, in the anguish of his soul, he
serv'd ;

Rewarded faster still than he deserv'd :
Behold him now exalted into trust ;

His counsels oft convenient, feldom just.
E'en in the most sincere advice he gave,
He had a grudging still to be a knave.

The frauds he learnt in his fanatic
years,

Made him uneasy in his lawful gears :
At least as little honest as he cou'd :

And, like white witches, mischievously
good.

To his first bias, longingly, he leans ;
And rather wou'd be great by wicked
means.

The *Ibrenodia*, which by a term, I
am afraid neither authorized nor ana-
logical,

logical, he calls *Augustalis*, is not among his happiest productions. Its first and obvious defect is the irregularity of its metre, to which the ears of that age, however, were accustomed. What is worse, it has neither tenderness nor dignity, it is neither magnificent nor pathetick. He seems to look round him for images which he cannot find, and what he has he distorts by endeavouring to enlarge them. He is, he says, *petrified with grief*; but the marble sometimes relents, and trickles in a joke.

The sons of art all med'cines try'd,
And every noble remedy apply'd;

r

With

With emulation each essay'd

His utmost skill; *nay more, they*
pray'd:

Was never losing game with better conduct play'd.

He had been a little inclined to mer-
riment before upon the prayers of a
nation for their dying sovereign, nor
was he serious enough to keep heathen
fables out of his religion.

With him th' innumerable croud of
armed prayers
Knock'd at the gates of heav'n and
knock'd aloud;

The first well-meaning rude petitioners,
All for his life assail'd the throne,
All would have brib'd the skies by
offering up their own.

So

So great a throng not heaven itself could
bar;

'Twas almost borne by force as in the
giants war.

The prayers, at least, for his reprieve
were heard;

His death, like Hezekiah's, was de-
ferr'd.

There is throughout the composition
a desire of splendor without wealth. In
the conclusion, he seems too much pleas-
ed with the prospect of the new reign
to have lamented his old master with
much sincerity.

He did not miscarry in this attempt
for want of skill either in lyrick or
elegiack poetry. His poem *on the death*
of Mrs. Killigrew, is undoubtedly the

noblest ode that our language ever has produced. The first part flows with a torrent of enthusiasm. *Fervet immensusque ruit.* All the stanzas indeed are not equal. An imperial crown cannot be one continued diamond; the gems must be held together by some less valuable matter.

In his first ode for Cecilia's day, which is lost in the splendor of the second, there are passages which would have dignified any other poet. The first stanza is vigorous and elegant, though the word *diapason* is too technical, and the rhymes are too remote from one another.

From

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,

This universal frame began :

When nature underneath a heap of
jarring atoms lay,

And could not heave her head,

The tuneful voice was heard from high,

Arise ye more than dead.

Then cold and hot, and moist and dry,

In order to their stations leap,

And music's power obey.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,

This universal frame began :

From harmony to harmony

Through all the compass of the notes it
ran,

The diapason closing full in man.

The conclusion is likewise striking,
but it includes an image so awful in itself,

that it can owe little to poetry; and I could wish the antithesis of *musick untuning* had found some other place.

As from the power of sacred lays

The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise

To all the bless'd above.

So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And music shall untune the sky.

Of his skill in Elegy he has given a specimen in his *Eleonora*, of which the following lines discover their author.

Tho' all these rare endowments of the
mind

Were in a narrow space of life confin'd,

The figure was with full perfection
crown'd ;

Tho' not so large an orb, as truly round.

As when in glory, thro' the public place,

The spoils of conquer'd nations were to
pass,

And but one day for triumph was al-
low'd,

The consul was constrain'd his pomp to
crow'd ;

And so the swift procession hurry'd on,

That all, tho' not distinctly, might be
shown :

So in the straiten'd bounds of life con-
fin'd,

She gave but glimpses of her glorious
mind ;

And multitudes of virtues pass'd along;
 Each pressing foremost in the mighty
 throng,

Ambitious to be seen, and then make
 room

For greater multitudes, that were to
 come.

Yet unemploy'd no minute slipp'd away;
 Moments were precious in so short a stay.

The haste of heaven to have her was
 so great,

That some were single acts, tho' each
 compleat;

And every act stood ready to repeat.

This piece, however, is not without
 its faults, there is so much likeness in
 the initial comparison, that there is no
 illustration.

illustration. As a king would be lamented, Eleonora was lamented.

As when some great and gracious monarch dies,

Soft whispers, first, and mournful murmurs rise

Among the sad attendants; then the sound

Soon gathers voice, and spreads the news around,

Thro' town and country, till the dreadful blast

Is blown to distant colonies at last;

Who, then, perhaps, were offering vows in vain,

For his long life, and for his happy reign:

So

So slowly by degrees, unwilling fame
 Did matchless Eleonora's fate pro-
 claim,
 Till public as the loss the news be-
 came.

This is little better than to say in
 praise of a shrub, that it is as green as a
 tree, or of a brook, that it waters a gar-
 den, as a river waters a country.

Dryden confesses that he did not know
 the lady whom he celebrates; the praise
 being therefore inevitably general, fixes
 no impression upon the reader, nor ex-
 cites any tendency to love, nor much
 desire of imitation. Knowledge of the
 subject is to the poet, what materials are
 to the architect.

The

The *Religio Laici*, which borrows its title from the *Religio Medici* of Browne, is almost the only work of Dryden which can be considered as a voluntary effusion ; in this, therefore, it might be hoped, that the full effulgence of his genius would be found. But unhappily the subject is rather argumentative than poetical : he intended only a specimen of metrical disputation.

And this unpolish'd rugged verse I
chose,

As fittest for discourse, and nearest
prose.

This, however, is a composition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very properly diversified with the solemn, and the grave with the humorous ;

morous; in which metre has neither weakened the force, nor clouded the perspicuity of argument; nor will it be easy to find another example equally happy of this middle kind of writing, which though prosaick in some parts, rises to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the skies, nor creeps along the ground.

Of the same kind or not far distant from it is, the *Hind and Panther*, the longest of all Dryden's original poems; an allegory intended to comprize and to decide the controversy between the Romanists and Protestants. The scheme of the work is injudicious and incommodious; for what can be more absurd than that one beast should counsel another to rest her faith upon a pope and council?

council? He seems well enough skilled in the usual topicks of argument, endeavours to shew the necessity of an infallible judge, and reproaches the Reformers with want of unity; but is weak enough to ask, why since we see without knowing how, we may not have an infallible judge without knowing where.

The *Hind* at one time is afraid to drink at the common brook, because she may be worried; but walking home with the *Panther*, talks by the way of the *Nicene Fathers*, and at last declares herself to be the Catholic church.

This absurdity was very properly ridiculed in the *City Mouse* and *Country Mouse* of *Montague* and *Prior*; and in the detection and censure of the
incon-

incongruity of the fiction chiefly consists the value of their performance, which, whatever reputation it might obtain by the help of temporary passions, seems to readers almost a century distant, not very forcible or animated.

Pope, whose judgement was perhaps a little bribed by the subject, used to mention this poem as the most correct specimen of Dryden's versification. It was indeed written when he had completely formed his manner, and may be supposed to exhibit, negligence excepted, his deliberate and ultimate scheme of metre.

We may therefore reasonably infer, that he did not approve the perpetual uniformity which confines the
sense

sense to couplets, since he has broken his lines in the initial paragraph.

A milk-white Hind, immortal and un-
chang'd,

Fed on the lawns, and in the forest
rang'd;

Without unspotted, innocent within,
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.

Yet had she oft been chac'd with horns
and hounds

And Scythian shafts, and many winged
wounds

Aim'd at her heart; was often forc'd to
fly,

And doom'd to death, though fated not
to die.

These lines are lofty, elegant, and
musical, notwithstanding the interrup-
tion

tion of the pause, of which the effect is rather increase of pleasure by variety than offence by ruggedness.

To the first part it was his intention, he says, *to give the majestick turn of heroick poesy*; and perhaps he might have executed his design not unsuccessfully, had not an opportunity of satire, which he cannot forbear, fallen sometimes in his way. The character of a Presbyterian, whose emblem is the *Wolf*, is not very heroically majestick.

More haughty than the rest, the wolf-	}
ish race	
Appear with belly gaunt and famish'd	
face :	
Never was so deform'd a beast of	}
grace.	

His

His ragged tail betwixt his legs he
 wears,
 Close clapp'd for shame; but his rough
 creast he rears,
 And pricks up his predestinating ears.

His general character of the other
 sorts of beasts that never go to church,
 though spritely and keen, has, however,
 not much of heroick poesy.

These are the chief; to number o'er the
 rest,

And stand, like Adam, naming every
 beast,

Were weary work; nor will the muse de-
 scribe

A slimy-born, and sun-begotten tribe;

f

Who

Who far from steeples and their sacred
found,

In fields their fullen conventicles found.

These gross, half-animated, lumps I
leave;

Nor can I think what thoughts they can
conceive;

But if they think at all, 'tis sure no
higher

Than matter, put in motion, may aspire;
Souls that can scarce ferment their
mass of clay;

So droffy, so divisible are they,
As would but serve pure bodies for
allay:

Such souls as shards produce, such
beetle things

As only buz to heaven with evening
wings;

Strike

Strike in the dark, offending but by
chance ;

Such are the blindfold blows of ig-
norance.

They know not beings, and but hate a
name ;

To them the Hind and Panther are the
same.

One more instance, and that taken
from the narrative part, where style was
more in his choice, will show how
steadily he kept his resolution of heroic
dignity.

For when the herd, suffic'd, did late re-
pair

To ferny heaths, and to their forest
laire,

She made a mannerly excuse to stay,
 Proffering the Hind to wait her half
 the way :

That since the sky was clear, an hour of
 talk

Might help her to beguile the tedious
 walk.

With much good-will the motion was
 embrac'd,

To chat a while on their adventures
 pass'd :

Nor had the grateful Hind so soon forgot
 Her friend and fellow-sufferer in the plot.

Yet wondering how of late she grew
 estrang'd,

Her forehead cloudy and her count'nance
 chang'd,

She

She thought this hour th' occasion would
present

To learn her secret cause of discontent,
Which well she hop'd, might be with
ease redress'd,

Considering her a well-bred civil beast,
And more a gentlewoman than the rest.

After some common talk what rumours
ran,

The lady of the spotted muff began.

The second and third parts he professes to have reduced to diction more familiar and more suitable to dispute and conversation; the difference is not, however, very easily perceived; the first has familiar and the two others have sonorous lines. The original incongruity runs through the whole; the king is now

Cæsar, and now the *Lyon*; and the name *Pan* is given to the Supreme Being.

But when this constitutional absurdity is forgiven, the poem must be confessed to be written with great smoothness of metre, a wide extent of knowledge, and an abundant multiplicity of images; the controversy is embellished with pointed sentences, diversified by illustrations, and enlivened by sallies of invective. Some of the facts to which allusions are made, are now become obscure, and perhaps there may be many satirical passages little understood.

As it was by its nature a work of defiance, a composition which would naturally be examined with the utmost acrimony of criticism, it was probably
laboured

laboured with uncommon attention; and there are, indeed, few negligences in the subordinate parts. The original impropriety, and the subsequent unpopularity of the subject, added to the ridiculousness of its first elements, has sunk it into neglect; but it may be usefully studied, as an example of poetical ratiocination, in which the argument suffers little from the metre.

In the poem on *the Birth of the Prince of Wales*, nothing is very remarkable but the exorbitant adulation, and the insensibility of the precipice on which the king was then standing, which the laureate apparently shared with the rest of the courtiers. A few months cured him of controversy, dismissed him from court,

and made him again a playwright and translator.

Of Juvenal there had been a translation by Stapylton, and another by Holiday; neither of them is very poetical. Stapylton is more smooth, and Holiday's is more esteemed for the learning of his notes. A new version was proposed to the poets of that time, and undertaken by them in conjunction. The main design was conducted by Dryden, whose reputation was such that no man was unwilling to serve the Muses under him.

The general character of this translation will be given, when it is said to preserve the wit, but to want the dignity of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal

venal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected; but his grandeur none of the band seemed to consider as necessary to be imitated, except *Creech*, who undertook the thirteenth satire. It is therefore perhaps possible to give a better representation of that great satirist, even in those parts which Dryden himself has translated, some passages excepted, which will never be excelled.

With Juvenal was published Persius, translated wholly by Dryden. This work, though like all the other productions of Dryden it may have shining parts, seems to have been written merely for wages, in an uniform mediocrity, with-

without any eager endeavour after excellence, or laborious effort of the mind.

There wanders an opinion among the readers of poetry, that one of these satires is an exercise of the school. Dryden says that he once translated it at school; but not that he preserved or published the juvenile performance.

Not long afterwards he undertook, perhaps the most arduous work of its kind, a translation of Virgil, for which he had shewn how well he was qualified by his version of the *Pollio*, and two episodes, one of *Nisus and Euryalus*, the other of *Mezentius and Lausus*.

In the comparison of Homer and Virgil, the discriminative excellence
of

of Homer is elevation and comprehension of thought, and that of Virgil is grace and splendor of diction. The beauties of Homer are therefore difficult to be lost, and those of Virgil difficult to be retained. The massy trunk of sentiment is safe by its solidity, but the blossoms of elocution easily drop away. The author, having the choice of his own images, selects those which he can best adorn: the translator must, at all hazards, follow his original, and express thoughts which perhaps he would not have chosen. When to this primary difficulty is added the inconvenience of a language so much inferior in harmony to the Latin, it cannot be expected that they who read the

Geor-

Georgick and the Eneid should be much delighted with any version.

All these obstacles Dryden saw, and all these he determined to encounter. The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great; the nation considered its honour as interested in the event. One gave him the different editions of his author, and another helped him in the subordinate parts. The arguments of the several books were given him by Addison.

The hopes of the publick were not disappointed. He produced, says Pope, *the most noble and spirited translation that I know in any language*. It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in English, and appears to have satisfied his friends,

friends, and, for the most part, to have silenced his enemies. Milbourne, indeed, a clergyman, attacked it; but his outrages seem to be the ebullitions of a mind agitated by stronger resentment than bad poetry can excite, and previously resolved not to be pleased.

His criticism extends only to the Preface, Pastorals, and Georgicks; and, as he professes, to give this antagonist an opportunity of reprisal, he has added his own version of the first and fourth Pastorals, and the first Georgick. The world has forgotten his book; but since his attempt has given him a place in literary history, I will preserve a specimen of his criticism, by inserting his remarks on the invocation before the first
Geor-

Georgick, and of his poetry, by annexing his own version.

Ver. 1. "*What makes a plenteous harvest, when to turn, The fruitful soil, and when to sow the corn—It's unlucky, they say, to stumble at the threshold, but what has a plenteous harvest to do here? Virgil would not pretend to prescribe rules for that which depends not on the husbandman's care, but the disposition of Heaven altogether. Indeed, the plenteous crop depends somewhat on the good method of tillage, and where the land's ill manur'd, the corn, without a miracle, can be but indifferent; but the harvest may be good, which is its properest epithet, tho' the husbandman's skill were never so indiffe-*

“ *rent.* The next sentence is too literal,
 “ and *when to plough* had been *Virgil’s*
 “ meaning, and intelligible to every
 “ body; and *when to sow the corn*, is a
 “ needless addition.

Ver. 3. “ *The care of sheep, of oxen,*
 “ *and of kine, And when to geld the lambs,*
 “ *and sheer the swine*, would as well have
 “ fallen under the *cura boum, qui cultus*
 “ *habendo sit pecori*, as Mr. D’s deduction
 “ of particulars.

Ver. 5. “ *The birth and genius of the fru-*
 “ *gal bee, I sing, Mecænas, and I sing to thee.*
 “ —But where did *experientia* ever fig-
 “ nify *birth and genius*? or what ground
 “ was there for such a *figure* in this
 “ place? How much more manly is
 “ Mr. Ogylby’s version!

“ What

“ What makes rich grounds, in what

“ celestial signs,

“ ’Tis good to plough, and marry elms

“ with vines.

“ What best fits cattle, what with sheep

“ agrees,

“ And several arts improving frugal

“ bees,

“ I sing, *Mecænas*.

“ Which four lines, tho’ faulty enough,

“ are yet much more to the purpose

“ than Mr. *D*’s fix.

Ver. 22. “ *From fields and mountains to*

“ *my song repair. For patrium linquens*

“ *nemus, saltusque Lycæi*—Very well ex-

“ plain’d!

Ver. 23, 24. “ *Inventor Pallas, of the*
 “ *fatning oil, Thou founder of the plough,*
 “ *and ploughman’s toil!* Written as if
 “ *these had been Pallas’s invention. The*
 “ *ploughman’s toil’s* impertinent.

Ver. 25. “ —*The shroud-like cypress—*
 “ *Why shroud-like? Is a cypress pull’d*
 “ *up by the roots, which the sculpture in*
 “ *the last Eclogue fills Sylvanus’s hand*
 “ *with so very like a shroud?* Or did
 “ *not Mr. D. think of that kind of cy-*
 “ *press us’d often for scarves and hat-*
 “ *bands at funerals formerly, or for*
 “ *widow’s vails, &c. if so, ’twas a deep*
 “ *good thought.*

Ver. 26. “ —*That wear the royal ho-*
 “ *nours, and increase the year—What’s*
 “ *meant by increasing the year? Did the*

“ gods or goddesses add more months, or
 “ days, or hours to it? Or how can *arva*
 “ *tueri*—signify to wear rural honours?
 “ Is this to translate, or abuse an author?
 “ The next couplet are borrow’d from
 “ Ogylby, I suppose, because *less to the*
 “ *purpose* than ordinary.

Ver. 33. “ The patron of the world,
 “ and Rome’s peculiar guard—Idle, and
 “ none of Virgil’s, no more than the
 “ sense of the precedent couplet; so again,
 “ he interpolates Virgil with that and the
 “ round circle of the year to guide power-
 “ ful of blessings, which thou strew’st
 “ around. A ridiculous Latinism, and
 “ an impertinent addition; indeed the
 “ whole period is but one piece of ab-
 “ surdity

“ *furdity and nonsense*, as those who
 “ lay it with the *original* must find.

Ver. 42, 43. “ *And Neptune shall resign*
 “ *the fasces of the sea*. Was he *consul* or
 “ *dictator* there? And *watry virgins* for
 “ *thy bed* shall strive. Both absurd inter-
 “ *polations*.

Ver. 47, 48. “ *Where in the void of*
 “ *heaven a place is free*. Ah happy *D-n*,
 “ were *that place* for thee! But where
 “ is *that void*? Or what does our *transla-*
 “ *tor* mean by it? He knows what *Ovid*
 “ says, *God* did to prevent such a *void*
 “ in heaven; perhaps, this was then
 “ forgotten: but *Virgil* talks more sen-
 “ sibly.

Ver. 49. “ *The scorpion ready to re-*
 “ *ceive thy laws*. No, he would not

“ then have gotten out of his way so
 “ fast.

Ver. 56. “ *The Proserpine affects her*
 “ *silent seat*—What made her then so
 “ *angry with Ascalaphus*, for preventing
 “ her return? She was now mus’d to
 “ *Patience* under the *determinations* of
 “ *Fate*, rather than *fond* of her *resi-*
 “ *dence*.

Ver. 61, 2, 3. “ *Pity the poets, and*
 “ *the ploughmans cares, Interest thy great-*
 “ *ness in our mean affairs.* And use thy-
 “ *self betimes to hear our prayers.* Which
 “ is such a wretched *perversion* of *Virgil’s*
 “ *noble thought* as *Vicars* would have
 “ blush’d at; but *Mr. Ogylby* makes us
 “ some amends, by his better lines.

“ O where-

“ O wheresoe’er thou art, from thence

“ incline,

“ And grant assistance to my bold de-

“ sign!

“ Pity with me, poor husbandmens af-

“ fairs,

“ And now, as if translated, hear our

“ prayers.

“ This is *sense*, and *to the purpose*: the

“ other, poor *mistaken stuff*.”

Such were the strictures of Milbourne, who found few abettors; and of whom it may be reasonably imagined, that many who favoured his design were ashamed of his insolence.

When admiration had subsided, the translation was more coolly examined,

and found, like all others, to be sometimes erroneous, and sometimes licentious. Those who could find faults, thought they could avoid them; and Dr. Brady attempted in blank verse a translation of the Eneid, which, when dragged into the world, did not live long enough to cry. I have never seen it; but that such a version there is, or has been, perhaps some old catalogue informed me.

With not much better success, Trapp, when his Tragedy and his Prelections had given him reputation, attempted another blank version of the Eneid; to which, notwithstanding the slight regard with which it was treated, he had afterwards perseverance enough to add the

Eclogues

Eclogues and Georgicks. His book may continue its existence as long as it is the clandestine refuge of schoolboys.

Since the English ear has been accustomed to the melliflence of Pope's numbers, and the diction of poetry has become more splendid, new attempts have been made to translate Virgil; and all his works have been attempted by men better qualified to contend with Dryden. I will not engage myself in an invidious comparison, by opposing one passage to another; a work of which there would be no end, and which might be often offensive without use.

It is not by comparing line with line that the merit of great works is to be estimated, but by their general effects and

ultimate result. It is easy to note a weak line, and write one more vigorous in its place ; to find a happiness of expression in the original, and transplant it by force into the version : but what is given to the parts, may be subducted from the whole, and the reader may be weary, though the critick may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurements and delight ; by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That book is good in vain, which the reader throws away. He only is the master, who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity ; whose pages are perused with eagerness, and in hope of new pleasure are perused again ; and whose conclusion is perceived with an eye of sorrow, such as
the

the traveller casts upon departing day.

By his proportion of this predomination I will consent that Dryden should be tried; of this, which, in opposition to reason, makes Ariosto the darling and the pride of Italy; of this, which, in defiance of criticism, continues Shakespeare the sovereign of the drama.

His last work was his *Fables*, in which he gave us the first example of a mode of writing which the Italians call *refaccimento*, a renovation of ancient writers, by modernizing their language. Thus the old poem of *Boiardo* has been new-dressed by *Domenichi* and *Berni*. The works of Chaucer, upon which this kind of rejuvenescence has been bestowed

flowed by Dryden, require little criticism. The tale of the Cock seems hardly worth revival; and the story of *Palamon* and *Arcite*, containing an action unsuitable to the times in which it is placed, can hardly be suffered to pass without censure of the hyperbolical commendation which Dryden has given it in the general Preface, and in a poetical Dedication, a piece where his original fondness of remote conceits seems to have revived.

Of the three pieces borrowed from Boccace, *Sigismunda* may be defended by the celebrity of the story. *Theodore* and *Honorio*, though it contains not much moral, yet afforded opportunities of striking description. And *Cymon*

was

was formerly a tale of such reputation, that, at the revival of letters, it was translated into Latin by one of the *Be-roalds*.

Whatever subjects employed his pen, he was still improving our measures and embellishing our language.

In this volume are interspersed some short original poems, which, with his prologues, epilogues, and songs, may be comprised in Congreve's remark, that even those, if he had written nothing else, would have entitled him to the praise of excellence in his kind.

One composition must however be distinguished. The ode for *St. Cecilia's Day*, perhaps the last effort of his poetry, has been always considered as
exhi-

exhibiting the highest flight of fancy, and the exactest nicety of art. This is allowed to stand without a rival. If indeed there is any excellence beyond it, in some other of Dryden's works that excellence must be found. Compared with the Ode on *Killigrew*, it may be pronounced perhaps superiour in the whole; but without any single part, equal to the first stanza of the other.

It is said to have cost Dryden a fortnight's labour; but it does not want its negligences: some of the lines are without correspondent rhymes; a defect, which I never detected but after an acquaintance of many years, and which the enthusiasm of the writer might hinder him from perceiving.

His

His last stanza has less emotion than the former; but is not less elegant in the diction. The conclusion is vitious; the musick of *Timotheus*, which raised a monarch to the skies, had only a metaphorical power; that of *Cecilia*, which drew an angel down, had a real effect: the crown therefore could not reasonably be divided.

IN a general survey of Dryden's labours, he appears to have had a mind very comprehensive by nature, and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compositions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials.

The power that predominated in his intellectual operations was rather strong

rea-

reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented, he studied rather than felt, and produced sentiments not such as Nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; and seldom describes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of society, and confused in the tumults and agitations of life.

What he says of Love may contribute to the explanation of his character :

Love various minds does variously inspire;

It stirs in gentle bosoms gentle fire,

Like

Like that of incense on the altar laid;
But raging flames tempestuous souls
invade;

A fire which every windy passion blows,
With pride it mounts, or with revenge
it glows.

Dryden's was not one of the *gentle bosoms*: Love, as it subsists in itself, with no tendency but to the person loved, and wishing only for correspondent kindness; such love as shuts out all other interest; the love of the Golden Age, was too soft and subtle to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with some other desires; when it was inflamed by rivalry, or obstructed by difficulties;
when

when it invigorated ambition, or exasperated revenge.

He is therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetick; and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others. Simplicity gave him no pleasure; and for the first part of his life he looked on *Otway* with contempt, though at last, indeed very late, he confessed that in his play *there was Nature, which is the chief beauty.*

We do not always know our own motives. I am not certain whether it was not rather the difficulty which he found in exhibiting the genuine operations of the heart, than a servile submission to an injudicious audience, that filled his
plays

plays with false magnificence. It was necessary to fix attention; and the mind can be captivated only by recollection, or by curiosity; by reviving former thoughts, or impressing new: sentences were readier at his call than images; he could more easily fill the ear with some splendid novelty, than awaken those ideas that slumber in the heart.

The favourite exercise of his mind was ratiocination; and, that argument might not be too soon at an end, he delighted to talk of liberty and necessity, destiny and contingency; these he discusses in the language of the school with so much profundity, that the terms which he uses are seldom understood. It is indeed learning, but learning out of place.

When once he had engaged himself in disputation, thoughts flowed in on either side: he was now no longer at a loss; he had always argument at command; *verbaque provisam rem*—give him matter for his verse, and he finds without difficulty verse for his matter.

In Comedy, for which he professes himself not naturally qualified, the mirth which he excites will perhaps not be found so much to arise from any original humour, or peculiarity of character nicely distinguished and diligently pursued, as from incidents and circumstances, artifices and surprizes; from jests of action rather than of sentiment. What he had of humorous or passionate, he seems to have had not from nature, but

but from other poets; if not always as a plagiarist, at least as an imitator.

Next to argument, his delight was in wild and daring fallies of sentiment, in the irregular and excentrick violence of wit. He delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning, where light and darkness begin to mingle; to approach the precipice of absurdity, and hover over the abyss of unideal vacancy. This inclination sometimes produced nonsense, which he knew; as,

Move swiftly, fun, and fly a lover's
pace,

Leave weeks and months behind thee
in thy race.

Amariel flies

To guard thee from the demons of the
air;

My flaming sword above them to display,
All keen, and ground upon the edge of
day.

And sometimes it issued in absurdities,
of which perhaps he was not conscious:

Then we upon our orb's last verge shall

go,

And see the ocean leaning on the sky;

From thence our rolling neighbours we
shall know,

And on the lunar world securely pry.

These lines have no meaning; but may
we not say, in imitation of Cowley on
another book,

'Tis

"Tis so like *sense* 'twill serve the turn as
well?

This endeavour after the grand and the
new produced many sentiments either
great or bulky, and many images either
just or splendid :

I am as free as Nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage }
ran.

—"Tis but because the Living death
ne'er knew,

They fear to prove it as a thing that's
new :

Let me th' experiment before you try,
I'll show you first how easy 'tis to die.

—There with a forest of their darts he
strove,

And stood like *Capaneus* defying Jove;
With his broad sword the boldest beat-
ing down,

While Fate grew pale lest he should
win the town,

And turn'd the iron leaves of his dark
book

To make new dooms, or mend what it
mistook.

—I beg no pity for this] mouldering
clay;

For if you give it burial, there it takes
Possession of your earth;

If burnt, and scatter'd in the air, the
winds

That strew my dust diffuse my royalty,
And

And spread me o'er your clime; for
where one atom

Of mine shall light, know there Se-
bastian reigns.

Of these quotations the two first may be
allowed to be great, the two latter only
tumid.

Of such selection there is no end. I
will add only a few more passages; of
which the first, though it may perhaps
not be quite clear in prose, is not too
obscure for poetry, as the meaning that
it has is noble :

No, there is a necessity in Fate,
Why still the brave bold man is fortunate;
He keeps his object ever full in sight,
And that assurance holds him firm and
right;

True, 'tis a narrow way that leads to
blifs,

But right before there is no precipice;

Fear makes men look aside, and so their
footing miss.

Of the images which the two following citations afford, the first is elegant, the second magnificent; whether either be just, let the reader judge:

What precious drops are these,
Which silently each other's track pursue,
Bright as young diamonds in their infant dew?

—Resign your castle—

—Enter, brave Sir; for when you speak
the word,

The gates shall open of their own accord;

The

The genius of the place its Lord shall
meet,

And bow its towery forehead at your
feet.

These bursts of extravagance, Dryden calls the *Dalilabs* of the Theatre; and owns that many noisy lines of Maximin and Almanzor call out for vengeance upon him; but *I knew*, says he, *that they were bad enough to please, even when I wrote them.* There is surely reason to suspect that he pleased himself as well as his audience; and that these, like the harlots of other men, had his love, though not his approbation.

He had sometimes faults of a less generous and splendid kind. He makes,
like

like almost all other poets, very frequent use of Mythology, and sometimes connects religion and fable too closely, without distinction.

He descends to display his knowledge with pedantick ostentation; as when, in translating Virgil, he says, *tack to the larboard*—and *veer starboard*; and talks in another work of *virtue spooming before the wind*. His vanity now and then betrays his ignorance:

They Nature's king thro' Nature's
opticks view'd;

Revers'd they view'd him lessen'd to
their eyes.

He had heard of reversing a telescope,
and unluckily reverses the object.

He

He is sometimes unexpectedly mean. When he describes the Supreme Being as moved by prayer to stop the Fire of London, what is his expression?

A hollow crystal pyramid he takes,
In firmamental waters dipp'd above,
Of this a broad *extinguisher* he makes,
And *hoods* the flames that to their
quarry strove.

When he describes the Last Day, and the decisive tribunal, he intermingles this image:

When rattling bones together fly,
From the four quarters of the sky.

It was indeed never in his power to resist the temptation of a jest. In his *Elegy on Cromwel*:

No

No sooner was the Frenchman's cause
embrac'd,

Than the *light Monsieur* the grave *Don*
outweigh'd;

His fortune turn'd the scale—

He had a vanity unworthy of his
abilities; to shew, as may be suspec-
ted, the rank of the company with whom
he lived, by the use of French words,
which had then crept into conversation;
such as *fraicheur* for *coolness*, *fougue* for
turbulence, and a few more, none of
which the language has incorporated
or retained. They continue only where
they stood first, perpetual warnings to
future innovators.

These are his faults [of affectation;
his faults of negligence are beyond re-
cital.

cital. Such is the unevenness of his compositions, that ten lines are seldom found together without something of which the reader is ashamed. Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages; he seldom struggled after supreme excellence, but snatched in haste what was within his reach, and when he could content others was himself contented. He did not keep present to his mind an idea of pure perfection, nor compare his works, such as they were, with what they might be made. He knew to whom he should be opposed. He had more musick than Waller, more vigour than Denham, and more nature than Cowley; and from his contemporaries he was in no danger. Standing there.

therefore in the highest place, he had no care to rise by contending with himself; but while there was no name above his own, was willing to enjoy fame on the easiest terms.

He was no lover of labour. What he thought sufficient, he did not stop to make better; and allowed himself to leave many parts unfinished, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad. What he had once written, he dismissed from his thoughts; and, I believe, there is no example to be found of any correction or improvement made by him after publication. The hastiness of his productions might be the effect of necessity; but his subsequent neglect could hardly have
any

any other cause than impatience of study.

What can be said of his versification, will be little more than a dilatation of the praise given it by Pope.

Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught
to join

The varying verse, the full-resounding
line,

The long majestick march, and energy
divine.

Some improvements had been already made in English numbers; but the full force of our language was not yet felt; the verse that was smooth was commonly feeble. If Cowley had sometimes a finished line, he had it by chance. Dryden knew how to chuse the flowing and

the sonorous words ; to vary the pauses, and adjust the accents ; to diversify the cadence, and yet preserve the smoothness of his metre.

Of Triplets and Alexandrines, though he did not introduce the use, he established it. The triplet has long subsisted among us. Dryden seems not to have traced it higher than to Chapman's Homer ; but it is to be found in Phaer's Virgil, written in the reign of Mary, and in Hall's Satires, published five years before the death of Elizabeth.

The Alexandrine was, I believe, first used by Spenser, for the sake of closing his stanza with a fuller sound. We had a longer measure of fourteen syllables, into which the Eneid was translated by
Phaer,

Phaer, and other works of the ancients by other writers; of which Chapman's Iliad was, I believe, the last.

The two first lines of *Phaer's* third Eneid will exemplify this measure:

When Asia's state was overthrown, and
 Priam's kingdom stout,
 All guiltless, by the power of gods above
 was rooted out.

As these lines had their break, or *cæsura*, always at the eighth syllable, it was thought in time commodious to divide them; and quatrains of lines, alternately consisting of eight and six syllables, make the most soft and pleasing of our lyrick measures; as,

x

Relent-

Relentless Time, destroying power,
 Which stone and brass obey,
 Who giv'ſt to every flying hour
 To work ſome new decay.

In the Alexandrine, when its power was once felt, ſome poems, as *Drayton's Polyolbion*, were wholly written; and ſometimes the meaſures of twelve and fourteen ſyllables were interchanged with one another. Cowley was the firſt that inserted the Alexandrine at pleaſure among the heroick lines of ten ſyllables, and from him Dryden profeſſes to have adopted it.

The Triplet and Alexandrine are not univerſally approved. *Swift* always cenſured them, and wrote ſome lines to
 ridicule

ridicule them. In examining their propriety, it is to be considered that the effence of verse is regularity, and its ornament is variety. To write verse is to dispose syllables and sounds harmonically by some known and settled rule; a rule however lax enough to substitute similitude for identity, to admit change without breach of order, and to relieve the ear without disappointing it. Thus a Latin hexameter is formed from dactyls and spondees differently combined; the English heroick admits of acute or grave syllables variously disposed. The Latin never deviates into seven feet, or exceeds the number of seventeen syllables; but the English Alexandrine breaks the lawful bounds, and surprises the

reader with two syllables more than he expected.

The effect of the Triplet is the same : the ear has been accustomed to expect a new rhyme in every couplet ; but is on a sudden surpris'd with three rhymes together, to which the reader could not accommodate his voice, did he not obtain notice of the change from the braces on the margins. Surely there is something unskilful in the necessity of such mechanical direction.

Considering the metrical art simply as a science, and consequently excluding all casualty, we must allow that Triplets and Alexandrines inserted by caprice are interruptions of that constancy to which science aspires. And though the
variety

variety which they produce may very justly be desired, yet to make our poetry exact there ought to be some stated mode of admitting them.

But till some such regulation can be formed, I wish them still to be retained in their present state. They are sometimes grateful to the reader, and sometimes convenient to the poet. *Fenton* was of opinion that Dryden was too liberal and Pope too sparing in their use.

The rhymes of Dryden are commonly just, and he valued himself for his readiness in finding them; but he is sometimes open to objection.

It is the common practice of our poets to end the second line with a weak or grave syllable :

Together o'er the Alps methinks we fly,
 Fill'd with ideas of fair *Italy*.

Dryden sometimes puts the weak rhyme in the first :

Laugh all the powers that favour *tyranny*,
 And all the standing army of the sky.

Sometimes he concludes a period or paragraph with the first line of a couplet, which, though the French seem to do it without irregularity, always displeases in English poetry.

The Alexandrine, though much his favourite, is not always very diligently fabricated by him. It invariably requires a break at the sixth syllable; a rule which the modern French poets never violate, but which Dryden sometimes neglected :

And

And with paternal thunder vindicates
his throne.

Of Dryden's works it was said by Pope, that *he could select from them better specimens of every mode of poetry than any other English writer could supply*. Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught *sapere & fari*, to think naturally and express forcibly. He taught us that it was possible to reason in rhyme. He shewed us the true bounds of a translator's liberty. What was said of Rome,

adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, *lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit*, he found it brick, and he left it marble.

THE invocation before the Georgicks is here inserted from Mr. Milbourne's version, that, according to his own proposal, his verses may be compared with those which he censures.

What makes the richest *tilth*, beneath what signs
 To plough, and when to match your *elms* and *vines*?
 What care with *flocks* and what with *herds* agrees,
 And all the management of frugal *bees*,
 I sing, *Mæcenas*! Ye immensely clear,
 Vast orbs of light which guide the rolling year;

Bacchus, and mother *Ceres*, if by you
 We fat'ning *corn* for hungry *mast* pursue,
 If, taught by you, we first the *cluster* prest,
 And *thin cold streams* with *spritely juice* refresh'd.
 Ye *fawns* the present *numens* of the field,
Wood nymphs and *fawns*, your kind assistance yield,
 Your gifts I sing! and thou, at whose fear'd stroke
 From rending earth the fiery *courser* broke,
 Great *Neptune*, O assist my artful song!
 And thou to whom the woods and groves belong,
 Whose snowy heifers on her flow'ry plains
 In mighty herds the *Cæan Isle* maintains!
Pan, happy shepherd, if thy cares divine,
 E'er to improve thy *Mænalus* incline;
 Leave thy *Lycæan wood* and *native grove*,
 And with thy lucky smiles our work approve!
 Be *Pallas* too, sweet oils inventor, kind;
 And he, who first the crooked *plough* design'd!
Sylvanus, god of all the woods appear,
 Whose hands a new-drawn tender *cypress* bear!

Ye

Ye *gods* and *goddesses* who e'er with love,
 Would guard our pastures, and our fields im-
 prove!

You, who new plants from unsown lands supply;
 And with condensing clouds obscure the sky,
 And drop 'em softly thence in fruitful showers,
 Assist my enterprize, ye gentler powers!

And thou, great *Cæsar*! tho' we know not yet

Among what gods thou'lt fix thy lofty seat,

Whether thou'lt be the kind *intelar god*

Of thy own *Rome*; or with thy awful nod,

Guide the vast world, while thy great hand

shall bear,

The fruits and seasons of the turning year,

And thy bright brows thy mother's myrtles

wear:

Whether thou'lt all the boundless ocean sway,

And sea-men only to thyself shall pray,

Thule, the farthest island kneel to thee,

And, that thou may'st her son by marriage be,

Tethys

Tethys will for the happy purchase yield
 To make a *dowry* of her watry field;
 Whether thou'lt add to heaven a *brighter sign*,
 And o'er the *summer months* serenely shine;
 Where between *Cancer* and *Erigone*,
 There yet remains a spacious *room* for thee.
 Where the hot *Scorpion* too his arms declines,
 And more to thee than half his *arch* resigns;
 Whate'er thou'lt be; for sure the realms below
 No just pretence to thy command can show:
 No such ambition sways thy vast desires,
 Tho' *Greece* her own *Elysian Fields* admires.
 And now, at last, contented *Proserpine*
 Can all her mother's earnest prayers decline.
 Whate'er thou'lt be, O guide our gentle course,
 And with thy smiles our bold attempts enforce;
 With me th' unknowing *rustics* wants relieve,
 And, tho' on earth, our sacred vows receive!

Mr.



Mr. Dryden, having received from Rymer his *Remarks on the Tragedies of the last Age*, wrote observations on the blank leaves; which, being now in the possession of Mr. Garrick, are by his favour communicated to the publick, that no particle of Dryden may be lost.

“ That we may the less wonder why
“ pity and terror are not now the only
“ springs on which our tragedies move,
“ and that Shakespeare may be more excused, Rapin confesses that the French
“ tragedies now all run on the *tendre*;
“ and gives the reason, because love is
“ the

" the passion which most predominates
 " in our souls, and that therefore the
 " passions represented become insipid,
 " unless they are conformable to the
 " thoughts of the audience. But it is
 " to be concluded that this passion works
 " not now amongst the French so strong-
 " ly as the other two did amongst the
 " ancients. Amongst us, who have a
 " stronger genius for writing, the ope-
 " rations from the writing are much
 " stronger : for the raising of Shake-
 " speare's passions is more from the ex-
 " cellency of the words and thoughts
 " than the justness of the occasion ; and
 " if he has been able to pick single oc-
 " casions, he has never founded the whole
 " rea-

“ reasonably : yet, by the genius of
 “ poetry in writing, he has succeeded.

“ Rapin attributes more to the *dictio*,
 “ that is, to the words and discourse of
 “ a tragedy, than Aristotle has done,
 “ who places them in the last rank of
 “ beauties ; perhaps, only last in order,
 “ because they are the last product of
 “ the design, of the disposition or con-
 “ nection of its parts ; of the characters,
 “ of the manners of those characters,
 “ and of the thoughts proceeding from
 “ those manners. Rapin’s words are re-
 “ markable : ’Tis not the admirable in-
 “ trigue, the surprising events, and ex-
 “ traordinary incidents, that make the
 “ beauty of a tragedy ; ’tis the dif-

“ courses, when they are natural and

“ passionate : so are Shakespear’s,

“ The parts of a poem, tragic or he-
“ roick, are,

“ 1. The fable itself.

“ 2. The order or manner of its con-
“ trivance, in relation of the parts to
“ the whole.

“ 3. The manners, or decency of the
“ characters in speaking or acting what
“ is proper for them, and proper to be
“ shewn by the poet.

“ 4. The thoughts which express the
“ manners.

“ 5. The words which express those
“ thoughts.

“ In

“ In the last of these, Homer excels
“ Virgil; Virgil all other ancient poets;
“ and Shakespeare all modern poets.

“ For the second of these, the order:
“ the meaning is, that a fable ought to
“ have a beginning, middle, and an end,
“ all just and natural: so that that part,
“ *e. g.* which is the middle, could not
“ naturally be the beginning or end, and
“ so of the rest: all depend on one ano-
“ ther, like the links of a curious chain.
“ If terror and pity are only to be
“ raised, certainly this author follows
“ Aristotle’s rules, and Sophocles’ and
“ Euripides’s example: but joy may be
“ raised too, and that doubly; either
“ by seeing a wicked man punished, or
“ a good man at last fortunate; or per-
“ haps

“ haps indignation, to see wickedness
 “ prosperous and goodness depressed :
 “ both these may be profitable to the
 “ end of tragedy, reformation of man-
 “ ners ; but the last improperly, only as
 “ it begets pity in the audience : tho’
 “ Aristotle, I confess, places tragedies
 “ of this kind in the second form.

“ He who undertakes to answer this
 “ excellent critique of Mr. Rymer, in
 “ behalf of our English poets against
 “ the Greek, ought to do it in this man-
 “ ner. Either by yielding to him the
 “ greatest part of what he contends for,
 “ which consists in this, that the *μῦθος*,
 “ *i. e.* the design and conduct of it, is
 “ more conducing in the Greeks to those
 “ ends of tragedy, which Aristotle and

“ he propose, namely, to cause terror
 “ and pity; yet the granting this does
 “ not set the Greeks above the English
 “ poets.

“ But the answerer ought to prove
 “ two things : first, that the fable is not
 “ the greatest master-piece of a tragedy,
 “ tho’ it be the foundation of it.

“ Secondly, That other ends as suitable
 “ to the nature of tragedy may be found
 “ in the English, which were not in the
 “ Greek.

“ Aristotle places the fable first; not
 “ *quoad dignitatem, sed quoad fundamen-*
 “ *tum* : for a fable, never so movingly
 “ contrived to those ends of his, pity
 “ and terror, will operate nothing on
 “ our affections, except the characters,
 “ man-

“manners, thoughts, and words, are
“fuitable.

“So that it remains for Mr. Rymer
“to prove, that in all those, or the
“greatest part of them, we are inferior
“to Sophocles and Euripides : and this
“he has offered at, in some measure ;
“but, I think, a little partially to the
“ancients.

“For the fable itself ; ’tis in the Eng-
“lish more adorned with episodes, and
“larger than in the Greek poets ; con-
“sequently more diverting. For, if the
“action be but one, and that plain,
“without any counter-turn of design or
“episode, *i. e.* under-plot, how can it
“be so pleasing as the English, which
“have both under-plot and a turned de-

“ sign, which keeps the audience in
 “ expectation of the catastrophe? where-
 “ as in the Greek poets we see through
 “ the whole design at first.

“ For the characters, they are neither
 “ so many nor so various in Sophocles
 “ and Euripides, as in Shakespeare and
 “ Fletcher; only they are more adapted
 “ to those ends of tragedy which Aris-
 “ totle commends to us, pity and ter-
 “ rour.

“ The manners flow from the charac-
 “ ters, and consequently must partake
 “ of their advantages and disadvan-
 “ tages.

“ The thoughts and words, which are
 “ the fourth and fifth beauties of tra-
 “ gedy, are certainly more noble and
 “ more

“ more poetical in the English than in
 “ the Greek, which must be proved by
 “ comparing them, somewhat more
 “ equitably than Mr. Rymer has done.

“ After all, we need not yield that
 “ the English way is less conducing to
 “ move pity and terror, because they
 “ often shew virtue oppressed and vice
 “ punished: where they do not both,
 “ or either, they are not to be de-
 “ fended.

“ And if we should grant that the
 “ Greeks performed this better, perhaps
 “ it may admit of dispute whether pity
 “ and terror are either the prime, or at
 “ least the only ends of tragedy.

“ 'Tis not enough that Aristotle has
 “ said so; for Aristotle drew his models

“ of tragedy from Sophocles and Euri
 “ pides ; and, if he had seen ours, might
 “ have changed his mind. And chiefly
 “ we have to say (what I hinted on
 “ pity and terror, in the last paragraph
 “ save one), that the punishment of vice
 “ and reward of virtue are the most ade-
 “ quate ends of tragedy, because most
 “ conducing to good example of life.
 “ Now pity is not so easily raised for a
 “ criminal, and the ancient tragedy al-
 “ ways represents its chief person such,
 “ as it is for an innocent man ; and the
 “ suffering of innocence and punishment
 “ of the offender is of the nature of
 “ English tragedy : contrarily, in the
 “ Greek, innocence is unhappy often,
 “ and the offender escapes. Then we
 “ are

“ are not touched with the sufferings of
 “ any sort of men so much as of lovers ;
 “ and this was almost unknown to the
 “ ancients : so that they neither admī-
 “ nistered poetical justice, of which Mr.
 “ Rymer boasts, so well as we ; neither
 “ knew they the best common place of
 “ pity, which is love.

“ He therefore unjustly blames us
 “ for not building on what the ancients
 “ left us ; for it seems, upon considera-
 “ tion of the premises, that we have
 “ wholly finished what they began.

“ My judgement on this piece is this,
 “ that it is extreamly learned ; but that
 “ the author of it is better read in the
 “ Greek than in the English poets : that
 “ all writers ought to study this critique,

“ as the best account I have ever seen of
 “ the ancients: that the model of tra-
 “ gedy he has here given is excellent,
 “ and extreme correct; but that it is
 “ not the only model of all tragedy, be-
 “ cause it is too much circumscribed in
 “ plot, characters, &c. and lastly, that
 “ we may be taught here justly to ad-
 “ mire and imitate the ancients, with-
 “ out giving them the preference with
 “ this author, in prejudice to our own
 “ country.

“ Want of method in this excellent
 “ treatise, makes the thoughts of the
 “ author sometimes obscure.

“ His meaning, that pity and terror
 “ are to be moved, is, that they are to
 “ be moved as the means conducing to
 “ the

“ the ends of tragedy, which are pleasure and instruction.

“ And these two ends may be thus distinguished. The chief end of the poet is to please; for his immediate reputation depends on it.

“ The great end of the poem is to instruct, which is performed by making pleasure the vehicle of that instruction; for poesy is an art, and all arts are made to profit. *Rapin.*

“ The pity, which the poet is to labour for, is for the criminal, not for those or him whom he has murdered, or who have been the occasion of the tragedy. The terror is likewise in the punishment of the same criminal; who, if he be represented too great an offender-

“ offender, will not be pitied: if alto-
 “ gether innocent, his punishment will
 “ be unjust.

“ Another obscurity is, where he says
 “ Sophocles perfected tragedy by intro-
 “ ducing the third actor; that is, he
 “ meant, three kinds of action; one
 “ company singing, or another playing
 “ on the musick; a third dancing.

“ To make a true judgement in this
 “ competition betwixt the Greek poets
 “ and the English, in tragedy:

“ Consider, first, how Aristotle has de-
 “ fined a tragedy. Secondly, what he
 “ assigns the end of it to be. Thirdly,
 “ what he thinks the beauties of it.
 “ Fourthly, the means to attain the end
 “ proposed.

“ Com-

“ Compare the Greek and English
 “ tragick poets justly, and without par-
 “ tiality, according to those rules.

“ Then, secondly, consider whether
 “ Aristotle has made a just definition of
 “ tragedy; of its parts, of its ends,
 “ and of its beauties; and whether he,
 “ having not seen any others but those
 “ of Sophocles, Euripides, &c. had or
 “ truly could determine what all the
 “ excellencies of tragedy are, and where-
 “ in they consist.

“ Next shew in what ancient tragedy
 “ was deficient: for example, in the
 “ narrowness of its plots, and fewness of
 “ persons, and try whether that be not
 “ a fault in the Greek poets; and whe-
 “ ther their excellency was so great,
 “ when

“ when the variety was visibly so little ;
 “ or whether what they did was not very
 “ easy to do.

“ Then make a judgement on what
 “ the English have added to their beau-
 “ ties : as, for example, not only more
 “ plot, but also new passions ; as, name-
 “ ly, that of love, scarce touched on by
 “ the ancients, except in this one ex-
 “ ample of Phædra, cited by Mr. Ry-
 “ mer ; and in that how short they were
 “ of Fletcher !

“ Prove also that love, being an he-
 “ roick passion, is fit for tragedy, which
 “ cannot be denied, because of the
 “ example alleged of Phædra ; and
 “ how far Shakespear has outdone them
 “ in friendship, &c.

“ To

“ To return to the beginning of this
 “ enquiry ; consider if pity and terror
 “ be enough for tragedy to move : and
 “ I believe, upon a true definition of
 “ tragedy, it will be found that its work
 “ extends farther ; and that it is to re-
 “ form manners, by a delightful repre-
 “ sentation of human life in great per-
 “ sons, by way of dialogue. If this be
 “ true, then not only pity and terror
 “ are to be moved, as the only means
 “ to bring us to virtue, but generally
 “ love to virtue and hatred to vice ; by
 “ shewing the rewards of one, and pu-
 “ nishments of the other ; at least, by
 “ by rendering virtue always amiable,
 “ tho’ it be shewn unfortunate ; and vice
 “ detestable, tho’ it be shewn triumphant.
 “ If,

“ If, then, the encouragement of vir-
 “ tue and discouragement of vice be the
 “ proper ends of poetry in tragedy, pity
 “ and terroure, tho’ good means, are not
 “ the only. For all the passions, in
 “ their turns, are to be set in a ferment:
 “ as joy, anger, love, fear, are to be
 “ used as the poet’s common-places;
 “ and a general concernment for the
 “ principal actors is to be raised, by
 “ making them appear such in their
 “ characters, their words, and actions,
 “ as will interest the audience in their
 “ fortunes.

“ And if, after all, in a larger sense,
 “ pity comprehends this concernment
 “ for the good, and terror includes de-
 “ testation for the bad, then let us con-
 “ sider

“ fider whether the English have not
 “ answered this end of tragedy, as well
 “ as the ancients, or perhaps better.

“ And here Mr. Rymer’s objections
 “ againſt theſe plays are to be impar-
 “ tially weighed, that we may ſee whe-
 “ ther they are of weight enough to
 “ turn the balance againſt our country-
 “ men.

“ ’Tis evident thoſe plays, which he
 “ arraigns, have moved both thoſe paſ-
 “ ſions in a high degree upon the ſtage.

“ To give the glory of this away from
 “ the poet, and to place it upon the
 “ actors, ſeems unjuſt.

“ One reaſon is, becauſe whatever ac-
 “ tors they have found, the event has
 “ been the ſame; that is, the ſame paſ-

“ ſions

“ fions have been always moved ; which
 “ shews, that there is something of
 “ force and merit in the plays them-
 “ selves, conducing to the design of
 “ raising these two passions : and sup-
 “ pose them ever to have been excel-
 “ lently acted, yet action only adds
 “ grace, vigour, and more life, upon
 “ the stage ; but cannot give it wholly
 “ where it is not first. But, secondly, I
 “ dare appeal to those who have never
 “ seen them acted, if they have not
 “ found these two passions moved within
 “ them : and if the general voice will
 “ carry it, Mr. Rymer’s prejudice will
 “ take off his single testimony.

“ This, being matter of fact, is rea-
 “ sonably to be established by this ap-

“ peal ;

“ peal : as if one man says ’tis night,
 “ the rest of the world conclude it to
 “ be day ; there needs no farther argu-
 “ ment against him, that it is so.

“ If he urge, that the general taste
 “ is depraved, his arguments to prove
 “ this can at best but evince that our
 “ poets took not the best way to raise
 “ those passions ; but experience proves
 “ against him, that these means, which
 “ they have used, have been successful,
 “ and have produced them.

“ And one reason of that success is,
 “ in my opinion, this, that Shakespeare
 “ and Fletcher have written to the ge-
 “ nius of the age and nation in which
 “ they lived ; for though nature, as he
 “ objects, is the same in all places, and

“ reason too the same ; yet the climate,
 “ the age, the disposition of the people,
 “ to whom a poet writes, may be so dif-
 “ ferent, that what pleased the Greeks
 “ would not satisfy an English au-
 “ dience.

“ And if they proceeded upon a foun-
 “ dation of truer reason to please the
 “ Athenians than Shakespeare and Flet-
 “ cher to please the English, it only
 “ shews that the Athenians were a more
 “ judicious people ; but the poet’s busi-
 “ ness is certainly to please the au-
 “ dience.

“ Whether our English audience have
 “ been pleased hitherto with acorns, as
 “ he calls it, or with bread, is the next
 “ question ; that is, whether the means
 “ which

“ which Shakespeare and Fletcher have
 “ used in their plays to raise those pas-
 “ sions before named, be better applied
 “ to the ends by the Greek poets than
 “ by them. And perhaps we shall not
 “ grant him this wholly : let it be
 “ granted that a writer is not to run
 “ down with the stream, or to please
 “ the people by their own usual me-
 “ thods, but rather to reform their
 “ judgements, it still remains to prove
 “ that our theatre needs this total re-
 “ formation.

“ The faults, which he has found in
 “ their designs, are rather wittily ag-
 “ gravated in many places than rea-
 “ sonably urged ; and as much may be

“ returned on the Greeks, by one who
 “ were as witty as himself.

“ 2. They destroy not, if they are
 “ granted, the foundation of the fa-
 “ brick ; only take away from the beau-
 “ ty of the symmetry : for example,
 “ the faults in the character of the King
 “ and No-king are not as he makes
 “ them, such as render him detestable,
 “ but only imperfections which accompa-
 “ ny human nature, and are for the most
 “ part excused by the violence of his
 “ love ; so that they destroy not our pity
 “ or concernment for him : this answer
 “ may be applied to most of his objec-
 “ tions of that kind.

“ And Rollo committing many mur-
 “ ders, when he is answerable but for
 “ one,

“ one, is too severely arraigned by him ;
 “ for it adds to our horror and detesta-
 “ tion of the criminal : and poetick jus-
 “ tice is not neglected neither ; for we
 “ stab him in our minds for every of-
 “ fence which he commits ; and the
 “ point, which the poet is to gain on
 “ the audience, is not so much in the
 “ death of an offender as the raising an
 “ horror of his crimes.

“ That the criminal should neither
 “ be wholly guilty, nor wholly inno-
 “ cent, but so participating of both as
 “ to move both pity and terror, is cer-
 “ tainly a good rule, but not perpetual-
 “ ly to be observed ; for that were to
 “ make all tragedies too much alike,

“ which objection he foresaw, but has
“ not fully answered.

“ To conclude, therefore; if the plays
“ of the ancients are more correctly
“ plotted, ours are more beautifully
“ written. And if we can raise passions
“ as high on worse foundations, it shews
“ our genius in tragedy is greater; for,
“ in all other parts of it, the English
“ have manifestly excelled them.”



THE original of the following letter is preserved in the library at Lambeth, and was kindly imparted to the publick by the reverend Dr. Vyse.

Copy

Copy of an original Letter from John
Dryden, Esq; to his sons in Italy,
From a MS in the Lambeth Libra-
ry, marked N^o. 933. p. 56.

(Superscribed)

Al Illustrissimo Sig^{re}

Carlo Dryden Camariere

d' Honore A. S. S.

In Roma.

Franca per Mantoua.

“ Sept. the 3d, our stile.

“ Dear Sons,

“ Being now at Sir William Bowyer's

“ in the country, I cannot write at large,

Z 4.

“ be-

“ because I find myself somewhat indif-
 “ posed with a cold, and am thick of
 “ hearing, rather worse than I was in
 “ town. I am glad to find, by your
 “ letter of July 26th, your stile, that
 “ you are both in health ; but wonder
 “ you should think me so negligent as
 “ to forget to give you an account of
 “ the ship in which your parcel is to
 “ come. I have written to you two or
 “ three letters concerning it, which I
 “ have sent by safe hands, as I told you,
 “ and doubt not but you have them,
 “ before this can arrive to you. Being
 “ out of town, I have forgotten the ship’s
 “ name, which your mother will en-
 “ quire, and put it into her letter,
 “ which is joined with mine. But the
 “ mas-

“ master’s name I remember : he is
 “ called Mr. Ralph Thorp ; the ship is
 “ bound to Leghorn, consigned to Mr.
 “ Peter and Mr. Tho. Ball, merchants.
 “ I am of your opinion, that by Ton-
 “ son’s means almost all our letters have
 “ miscarried for this last year. But how-
 “ ever he has missed of his design in
 “ the Dedication, though he had pre-
 “ pared the book for it ; for in every
 “ figure of Eneas he has caused him to
 “ be drawn, like K. William, with a
 “ hooked nose. After my return to
 “ town, I intend to alter a play of Sir
 “ Robert Howard’s, written long since,
 “ and lately put by him into my hands :
 “ ’tis called the *Conquest of China by the*
 “ *Tartars*. It will cost me six weeks
 “ study,

“ study, with the probable benefit of
 “ an hundred pounds. In the mean
 “ time I am writing a song for St. Ceci-
 “ lia’s Feast, who, you know, is the pa-
 “ troness of musick. This is trouble-
 “ some, and no way beneficial; but I
 “ could not deny the Stewards of the
 “ Feast, who came in a body to me to
 “ desire that kindness, one of them being
 “ Mr. Bridgman, whose parents are your
 “ mother’s friends. I hope to send
 “ you thirty guineas between Michael-
 “ mas and Christmase, of which I will
 “ give you an account when I come
 “ to town. I remember the counsel
 “ you give me in your letter; but
 “ dissembling, though lawful in some
 “ cases,

“cases, is not my talent; yet, for
 “your sake, I will struggle with the
 “plain openness of my nature, and
 “keep in my just resentments against
 “that degenerate order. In the mean
 “time, I flatter not myself with any
 “manner of hopes, but do my duty,
 “and suffer for God’s sake; being as-
 “sured, beforehand, never to be re-
 “warded, though the times should al-
 “ter. Towards the latter end of this
 “month, September, Charles will be-
 “gin to recover his perfect health,
 “according to his nativity, which,
 “casting it myself, I am sure is true,
 “and all things hitherto have hap-
 “pened accordingly to the very time
 “that

“ that I predicted them : I hope at
 “ the same time to recover more health,
 “ according to my age. Remember
 “ me to poor Harry, whose prayers
 “ I earnestly desire. My Virgil suc-
 “ ceeds in the world beyond its desert
 “ or my expectation. You know the
 “ profits might have been more ; but
 “ neither my conscience nor my honour
 “ would suffer me to take them : but
 “ I never can repent of my constancy,
 “ since I am thoroughly persuaded of
 “ the justice of the cause for which
 “ I suffer. It has pleased God to raise
 “ up many friends to me amongst my
 “ enemies, though they who ought to
 “ have been my friends are negligent

"of me. I am called to dinner, and
"cannot go on with this letter, which
"I desire you to excuse; and am

"Your most affectionate father

AG 12 "JOHN DRYDEN."

